shiwo komeyama

BLOODY CROSS

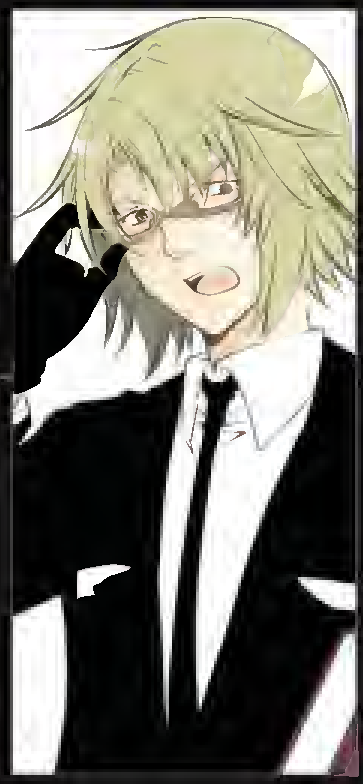
11

BLOODY CROSS

11

Shiwo Komeyama

BLOODY CROSS



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KATSUN (TAK)
KATSUN
KATSUN
...GO.
KATSUN
JUST KEEP WALKING.
KATSUN
KATSUN
KATSUN
...IS HE GONE?
IF HE FINDS ME...
...I'M DEAD.
KATSA (SHAKE)
KATSA
KATSUN
KATSUN

JI (STARE)
DOKI (BADUM)
DOKI
SO (PEEK)
...A BLACK SEAL!
GA-TA (CLUR(d))
...EEK!
GU (GRAB)
!!
N... NO!
BAKYA (SMASH)

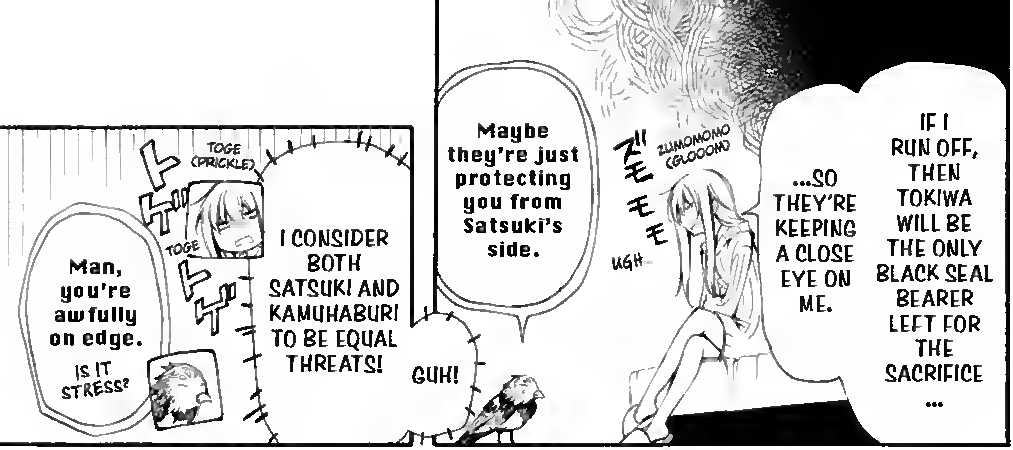
DON'T KILL ME!!
DO CRAP

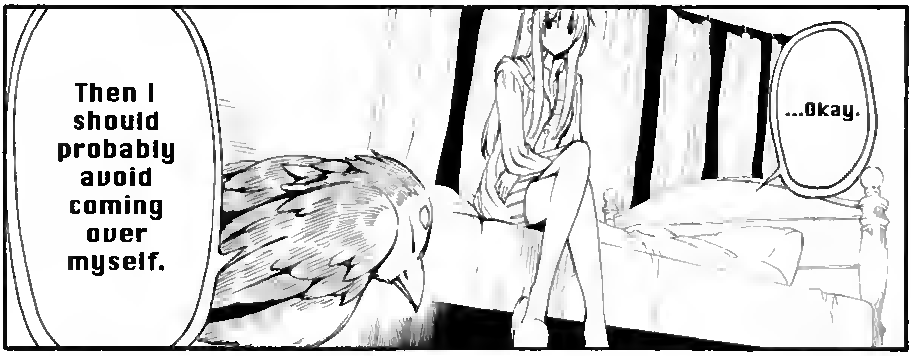
.....A DREAM?

Chapter 57
The Visitors

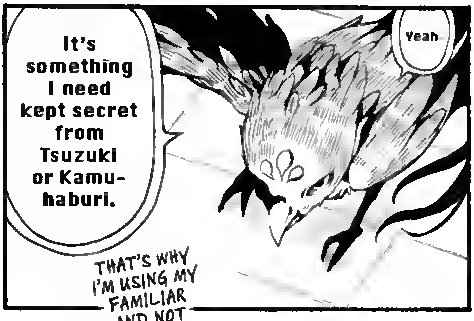
THE CRUSADES RECUR EVERY FIFTY YEARS.
PARA (FLIP)
AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE CRUSADES, ONE OF THE TWO MARKED WITH A BLACK SEAL...
...IS SACRIFIED UPON THE CEREMONIAL ALTAR BY A GOD CANDIDATE.
THERE CAN BE NO VICTORY WITHOUT THIS SACRIFICE.
AH, IT'S BECAUSE I WAS READING THIS WHEN I FELL ASLEEP.
A DREAM ABOUT MY DEATH...
IT FELT SO REAL...
SIGN OF A GUILTY CONSCIENCE ...?
KON (KNOCK) KON
KON (KNOCK) KON
KON (KNOCK)
SHA (SHFF)
!
HINATA'S FAMILIAR.
GARA (SLIDE)
YOU COMING IN?

MORNING
PISHA (SHUT)
SO... I JUMPED ONE OF THEM AND BEAT HIM UP...
...BEFORE I REALIZED HE WAS ONE OF ICHIKAWA'S FROM KAMUHA-BURI.
HE'S A BODY-GUARD, NOT A SPY.
GEEZ, YOU COULDA WARNED A GIRL!
I TOLD YOU I DON'T WANT A BODYGUARD, DIDN'T I!?
IRAA (IRK)
THEN CAME AN HOUR OF HEATED DEBATE ON THE STREET.
You're being watched?
SPEAKER: HINATA
THERE WAS SOME TROUBLE ONCE I NOTICED THE TAIL PARTWAY HOME...
I...
...THOUGHT IT WAS SATSUKI OR ARCANA AT FIRST.
TCH
YEAH. YOU KNOW HOW WE VISITED KAMU-HABURI YESTER-DAY?
LOOKS LIKE I PICKED UP AN ESCORT ON THE WAY BACK.


IF I RUN OFF, THEN TOKIWA WILL BE THE ONLY BLACK SEAL BEARER LEFT FOR THE SACRIFICE ...
...SO THEY'RE KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON ME.
ZUMONONO (GLOOOM)
UGH
Maybe they're just protecting you from Satsuki's side.
I CONSIDER BOTH SATSUKI AND KAMUHABURI TO BE EQUAL THREATS!
GUH!
TOGE (PRICKLE)
TOGE
Man, you're awfully on edge.
IS IT STRESS?

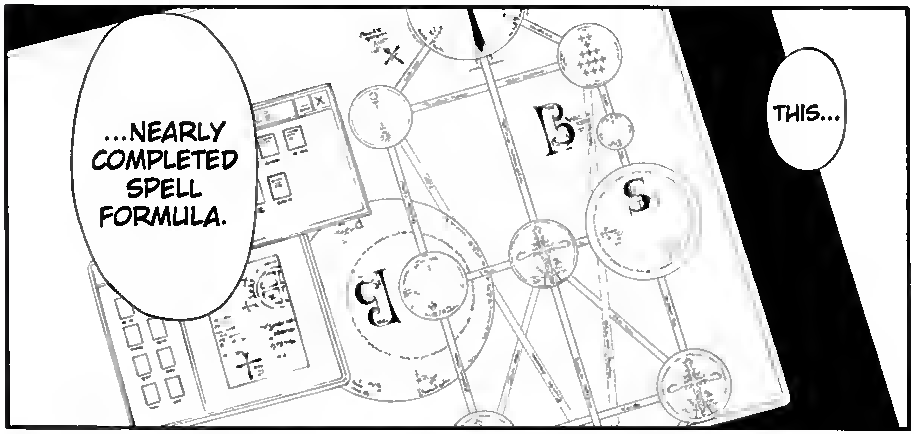

Then I should probably avoid coming over myself.
...Okay.

Would you be willing to meet me somewhere else? I'll direct you.
I need to talk to you about something.
TALK?

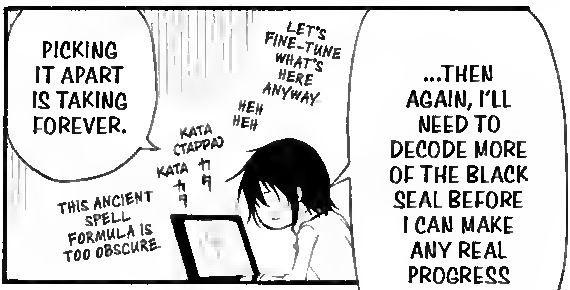

Yeah
It's something I need kept secret from Tsuzuki or Kamuhaburi.
THAT'S WHY I'M USING MY FAMILIAR AND NOT MY CELL

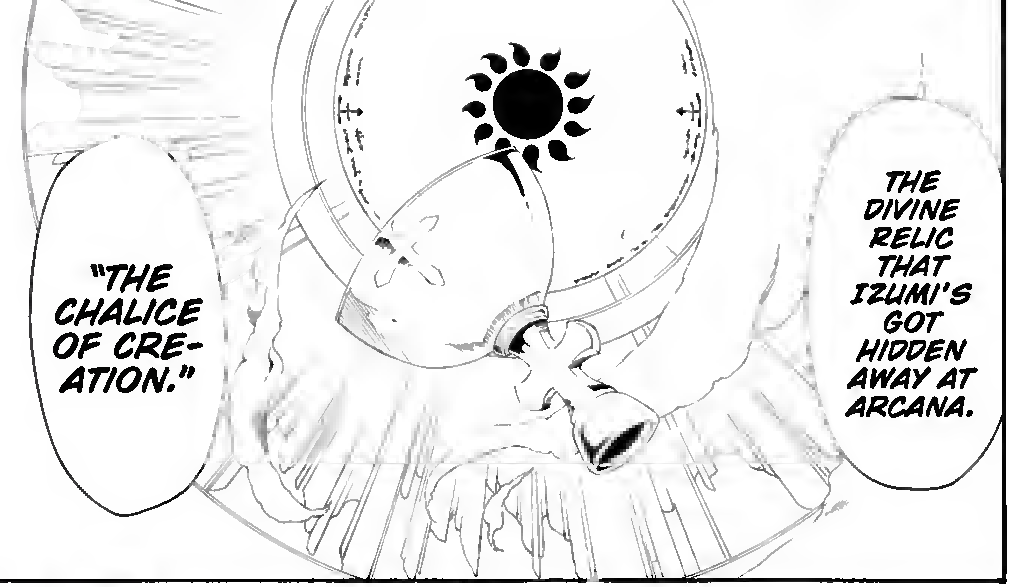
I SEE
.....
ALL RIGHT. DO YOU WANT ME TO HEAD OUT RIGHT AWAY?

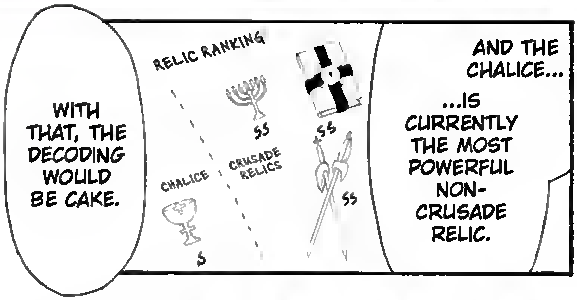
...I GUESS I CAN KEEP PLUGGING AWAY AT THIS A LITTLE LONGER.
GISHI (CREAK)
...NOW THAT'S DONE...
BO (WHOOSH)

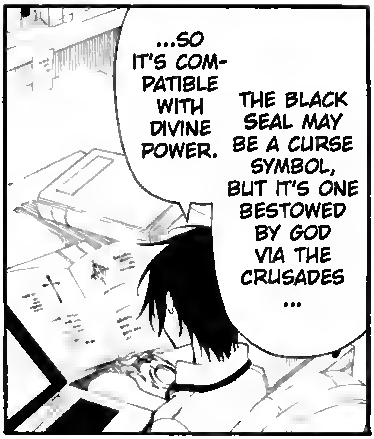

...NEARLY COMPLETED SPELL FORMULA.
THIS...

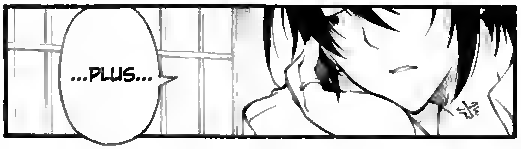
THERE'S ONE THING...
...I'D LOVE TO GET MY HANDS ON...

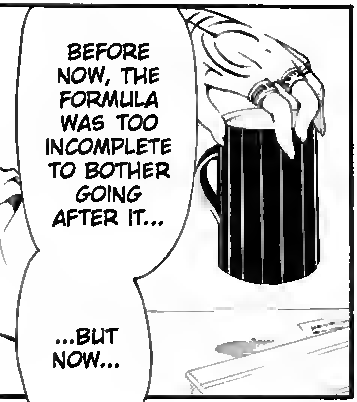

PICKING IT APART IS TAKING FOREVER.
THIS ANCIENT SPELL FORMULA IS TOO OBSCURE.
KATA (TAPPA)
KATA
HEH HEH
LET'S FINE-TUNE WHAT'S HERE ANYWAY
...THEN AGAIN, I'LL NEED TO DECODE MORE OF THE BLACK SEAL BEFORE I CAN MAKE ANY REAL PROGRESS WITH THIS.

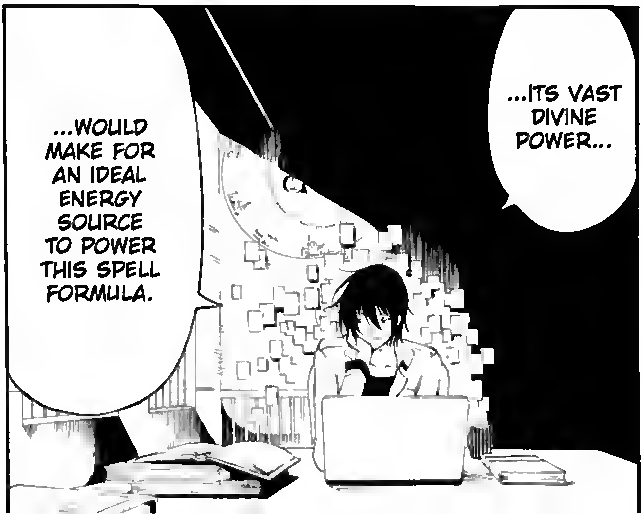

"THE CHALICE OF CREATION."
THE DIVINE RELIC THAT IZUMI'S GOT HIDDEN AWAY AT ARCANA.


WITH THAT, THE DECODING WOULD BE CAKE.
RELIC RANKING
CHALICE
CRUSADE RELICS
S
SS
SS
SS
AND THE CHALICE...
...IS CURRENTLY THE MOST POWERFUL NON-CRUSADE RELIC.


...SO IT'S COMPATIBLE WITH DIVINE POWER.
THE BLACK SEAL MAY BE A CURSE SYMBOL, BUT IT'S ONE BESTOWED BY GOD VIA THE CRUSADES ...


...PLUS...

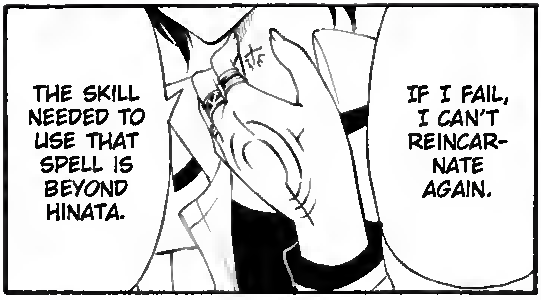

BEFORE NOW, THE FORMULA WAS TOO INCOMPLETE TO BOTHER GOING AFTER IT...
...BUT NOW...

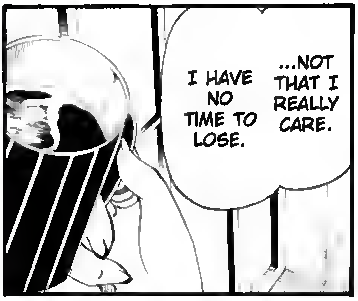

...WOULD MAKE FOR AN IDEAL ENERGY SOURCE TO POWER THIS SPELL FORMULA.
...ITS VAST DIVINE POWER...

EVEN SO...
...I DEFINITELY CAN'T DISCUSS THIS WITH TSUZUKI OR KAMUHABURI.
THERE'S NO WAY THEY'D HAND OVER A DIVINE RELIC TO ME

CRUSADE
I'LL PRETEND TO FOLLOW AND OBEY THE GOD CANDIDATE...
...BUT ALL THE WHILE, I'LL BE DESTROYING THE VERY STATION OF "GOD" THAT THEY'RE COMPETING FOR INSTEAD.

EVERYTHING I DO FROM NOW ON...
...WILL BE WORKING TOWARD DISMANTLING THE CRUSADES.
ZU (SIP)


IF I FAIL, I CAN'T REINCARNATE AGAIN.
THE SKILL NEEDED TO USE THAT SPELL IS BEYOND HINATA.

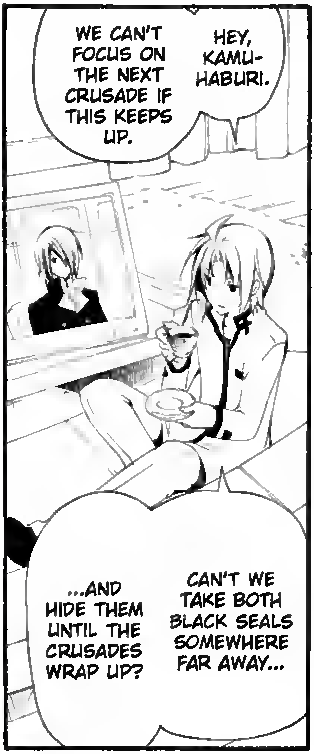

...NOT THAT I REALLY CARE.
I HAVE NO TIME TO LOSE.

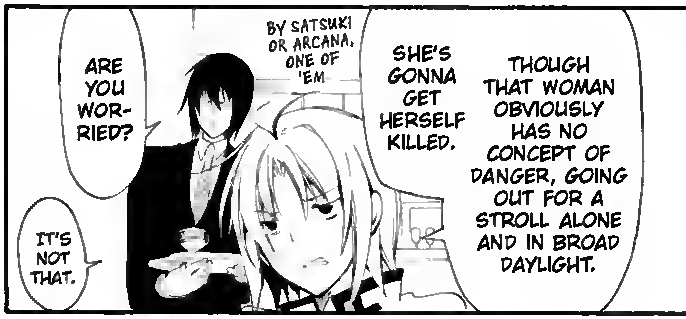
I'VE GOTTA WRAP THIS UP...
...BEFORE THE CRUSADES COME TO AN END.

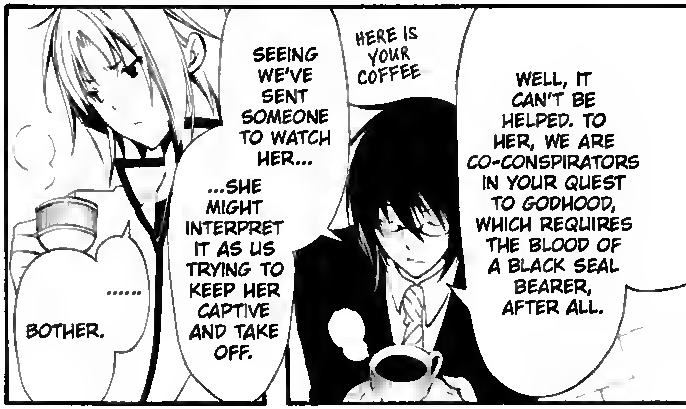
THE SUBJECT IS IN TRANSIT, ALONE AND ON FOOT.
HINATA'S FAMILIAR APPEARS TO HAVE VANISHED AFTER DELIVERING ITS MESSAGE.
Understood.
CONTINUE YOUR WATCH FROM A DISCREET DISTANCE, BUT BE NEAR ENOUGH TO RESPOND SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.
Yes, sir.
...I MUST SAY...
...I DIDN'T EXPECT HER TO BE UP AND ABOUT THIS EARLY.
INDEED. I GUESS WE WERE CARE-LESS.
I THOUGHT SHE WAS A BIT OF A LAYABOUT
YOU WERE STILL ASLEEP, HUH.
SORRY.

...IT'S TOTALLY FINE...
SLEEPY, SLEEPY
GOOD MORNING
I'M THE ONE WHO ASKED YOU TO REPORT EVERYTHING TO ME, SO...

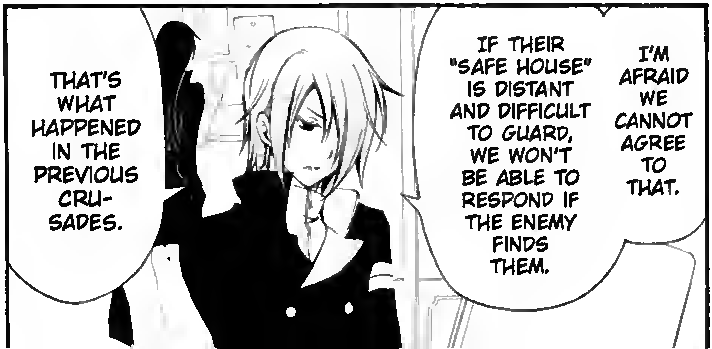
Yawn ...
Nah, don't worry about it.
MMBL MMBL


HEY, KAMU-HABURI.
WE CAN'T FOCUS ON THE NEXT CRUSADE IF THIS KEEPS UP.
CAN'T WE TAKE BOTH BLACK SEALS SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY...
...AND HIDE THEM UNTIL THE CRUSADES WRAP UP?

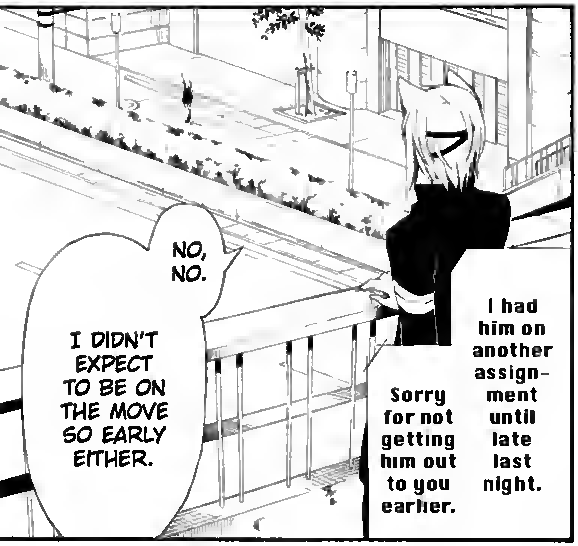

ARE YOU WOR-RIED?
IT'S NOT THAT.
BY SATSUKI OR ARCANA, ONE OF 'EM
SHE'S GONNA GET HERSELF KILLED.
THOUGH THAT WOMAN OBVIOUSLY HAS NO CONCEPT OF DANGER, GOING OUT FOR A STROLL ALONE AND IN BROAD DAYLIGHT.


BOTHER.
.....
...SHE MIGHT INTERPRET IT AS US TRYING TO KEEP HER CAPTIVE AND TAKE OFF.
SEEING WE'VE SENT SOMEONE TO WATCH HER...
HERE IS YOUR COFFEE
WELL, IT CAN'T BE HELPED. TO HER, WE ARE CO-CONSPIRATORS IN YOUR QUEST TO GODHOOD, WHICH REQUIRES THE BLOOD OF A BLACK SEAL BEARER, AFTER ALL.

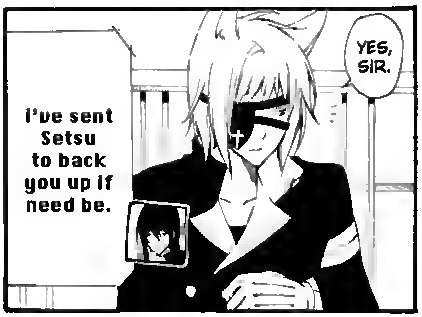
...FUR-THER-MORE...


THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PREVIOUS CRU-SADES.
IF THEIR "SAFE HOUSE" IS DISTANT AND DIFFICULT TO GUARD, WE WON'T BE ABLE TO RESPOND IF THE ENEMY FINDS THEM.
I'M AFRAID WE CANNOT AGREE TO THAT.

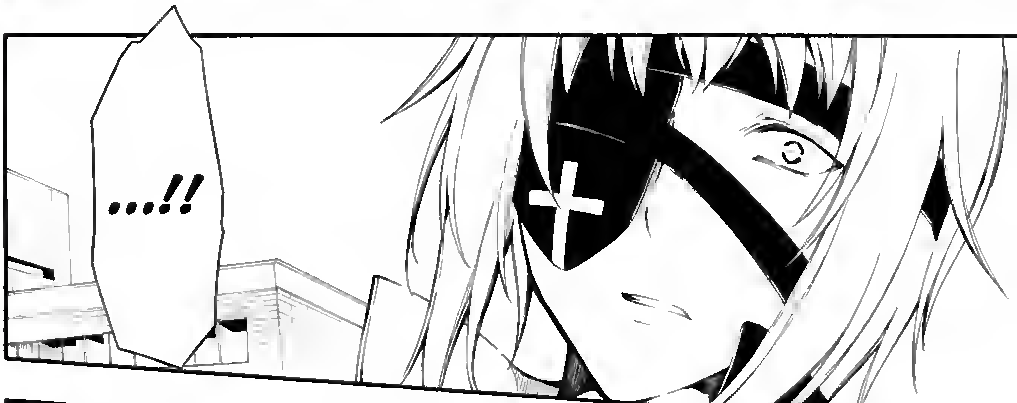
...how do you intend to perform the rites if both Black Seals have absconded?
...should you defeat Satsuki and win the right to become God...
... when the time comes ...

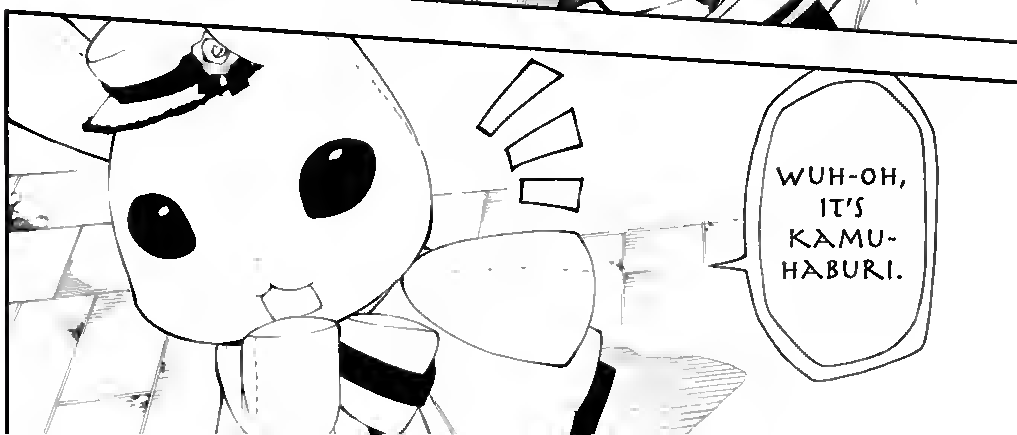

NO, NO.
I DIDN'T EXPECT TO BE ON THE MOVE SO EARLY EITHER.
Sorry for not getting him out to you earlier.
I had him on another assign-ment until late last night.

ICHI-KAWA, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
.....

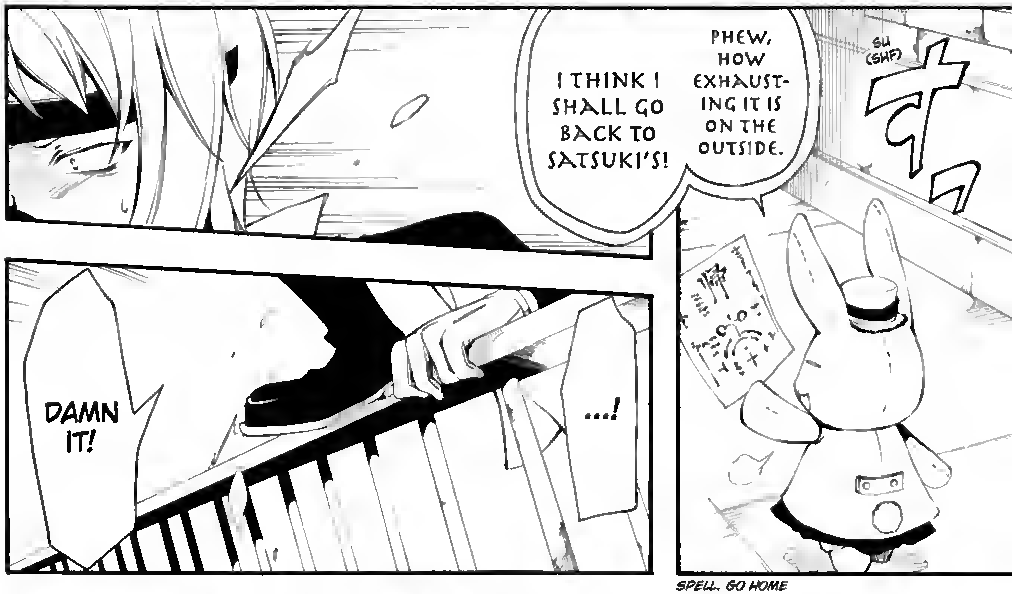

i've sent Setsu to back you up if need be.
YES, SIR.

I APOLOGIZE FOR NOT NOTIFYING YOU OF THE NEED SOON—
ガタ
GATA (CLATTER)

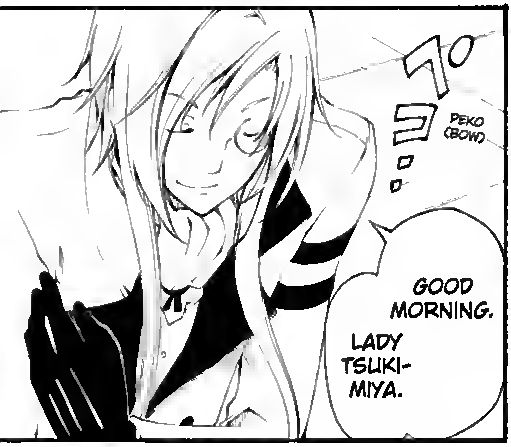

...!!


WUH-OH, IT'S KAMU-HABURI.

I have a visual on target Rido's doll!!
WHAT ...!?
I'M IN PURSUIT!
DA DASHO
WHEE!
WE LOST TRACK OF RIDO ONCE HE ALLIED WITH SATSUKI...
TCH
...SO WE HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO PUNISH HIM FOR HIS CRIMES.
I REALLY WANT TO DETAIN HER, BUT...
...IF OUR ENEMIES ARE SO CLOSE BY...
...I REALLY SHOULD NOT ABANDON THE BLACK SEAL...
RYON (BOING)
OH HO HO!



SPELL. GO HOME


ペコ
PEKO (BOW)
GOOD MORNING. LADY TSUKI-MIYA.

.....?

OH!
THIS GUY... I'VE SEEN HIM BE-FORE.
HE'S THE ONE WHO BRAIN-WASHED ME...!
...!!
ゾクッ
ZOKU (SHIVER)

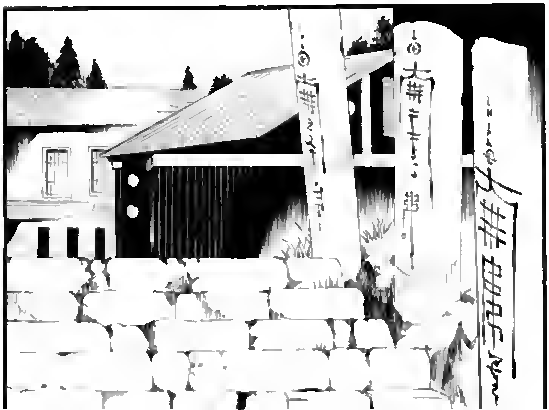
SU (SHF)
THIS SMALL TRINKET IS WHY I'VE COME TO PAY YOU A VISIT TODAY.
IT WOULD DELIGHT ME TO NO END IF YOU WERE TO FIND IT... TO YOUR LIKING...
PAKA (PWOF)
HO HO...
GUSU (SNIFF)
REJECTED. YOU ARE STILL AS COLD-HEARTED AS EVER.
OH.
FLED
GYUN (ZWOOM)
FOLLOW HER.
ZUZU (GLRCH)

PI (BEEP)
PI
NEED TO CALL HINATA FOR BACKUP ...
TCH!
ZUPA CLASH!
KU
THERE IS NO NEED, LADY TSUKI-MIYA.
AFTER ALL...
...MY BUSINESS WITH YOU IS ALREADY DONE.

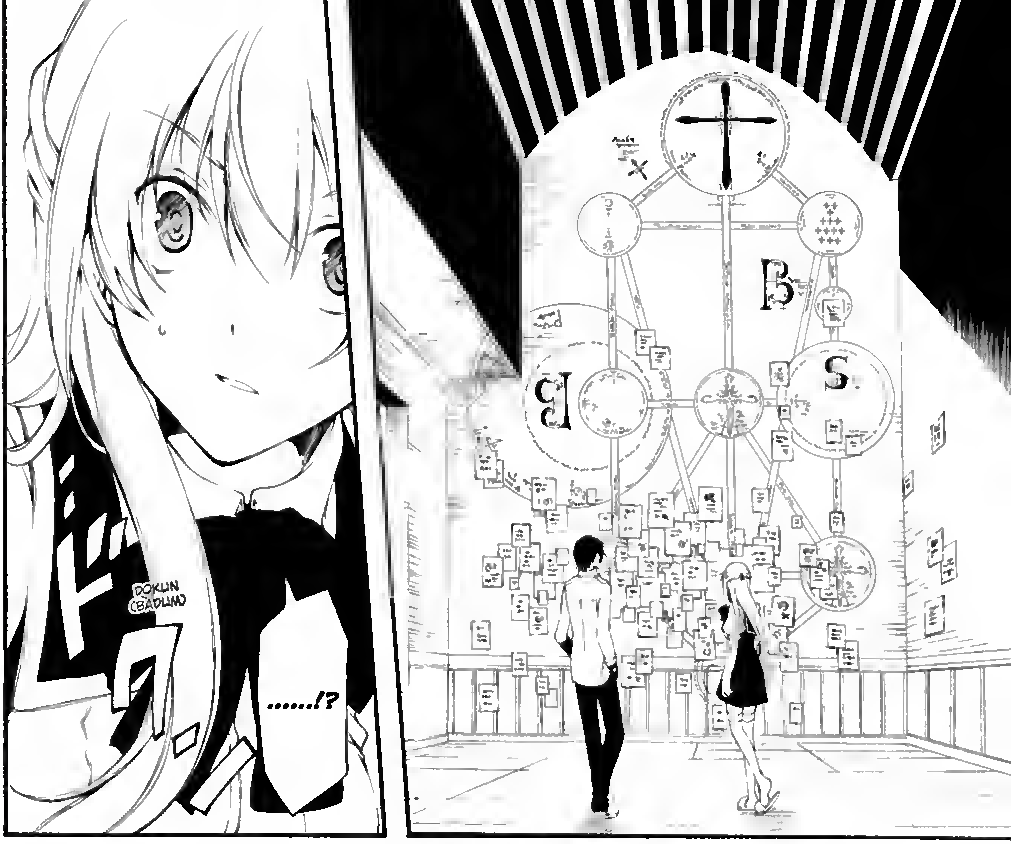
SUU
OHSHO
...FARE-
WELL.

WH...
WHA
...?

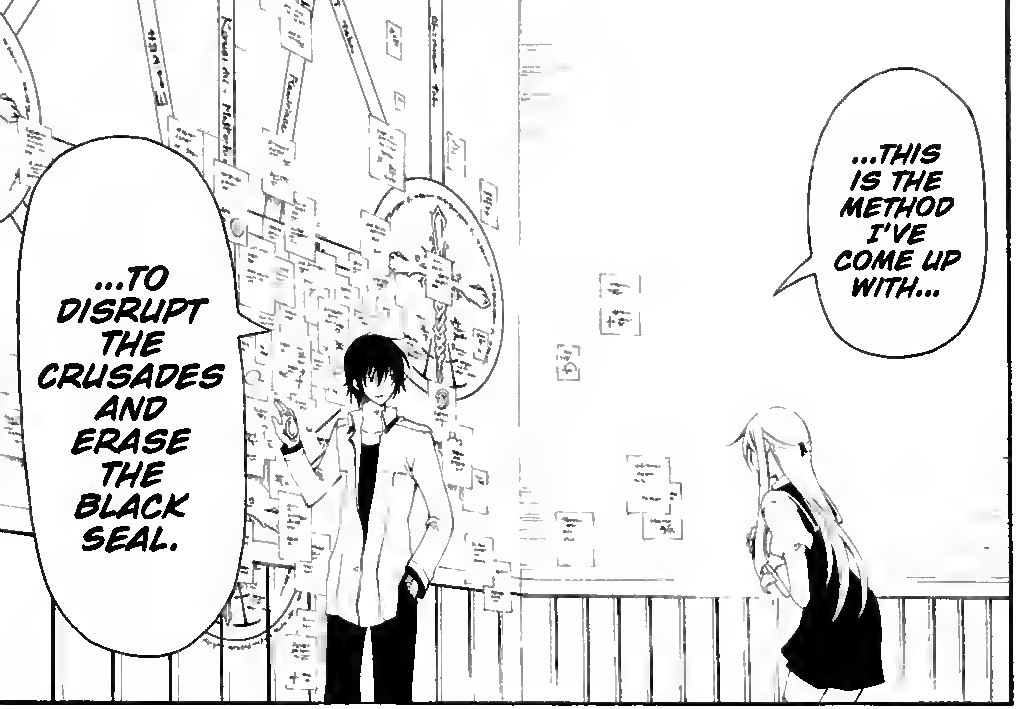
...
HUH?

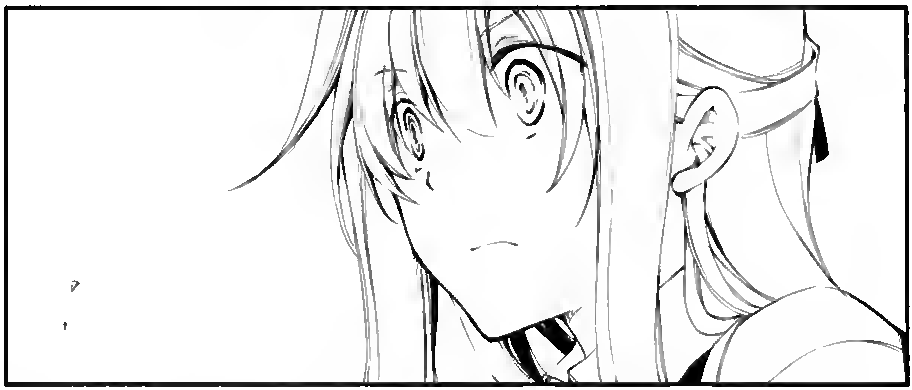


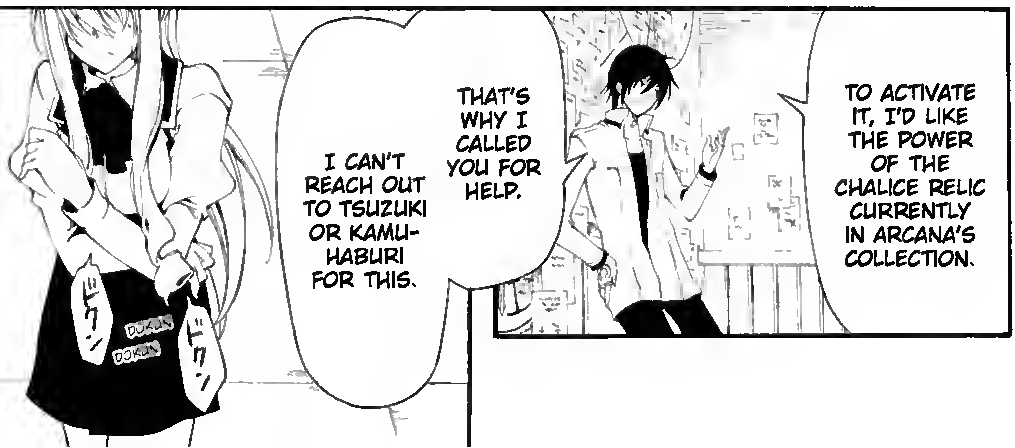
YOU RAN INTO RIDO!?
DID HE BRAIN-WASH YOU?
DOES IT LOOK LIKE HE DID?
NO, NOT REALLY.
BRAIN-WASHED
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
RIGHT?
YEAH.
...BUT THEN HE LEFT ALMOST IMMEDI-ATELY.
HUH?
MM....
...I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT...
IT DIDN'T FEEL LIKE HE TRIED TO DO ANYTHING EITHER, SO...
IT'S NOTH-ING.
IT
ANYWAY, YOU SAID YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO TALK TO ME ABOUT?
?
?
AHEM!
HURRY UP AND TELL ME...
HUH!? SLEEP-DEPRIVED!?
HEY! ARE YOU OKAY?
OR—
...OH!
OH...! MAYBE SHOWING HIMSELF TO YOU WAS A DISTRAC-TION...
...AND HIS REAL PURPOSE WAS ELSE-WHERE?
GON (WHAK)



SFX: DOKUN DOKUN DOKUN


...THIS IS THE METHOD I'VE COME UP WITH...
...TO DISRUPT THE CRUSADES AND ERASE THE BLACK SEAL.

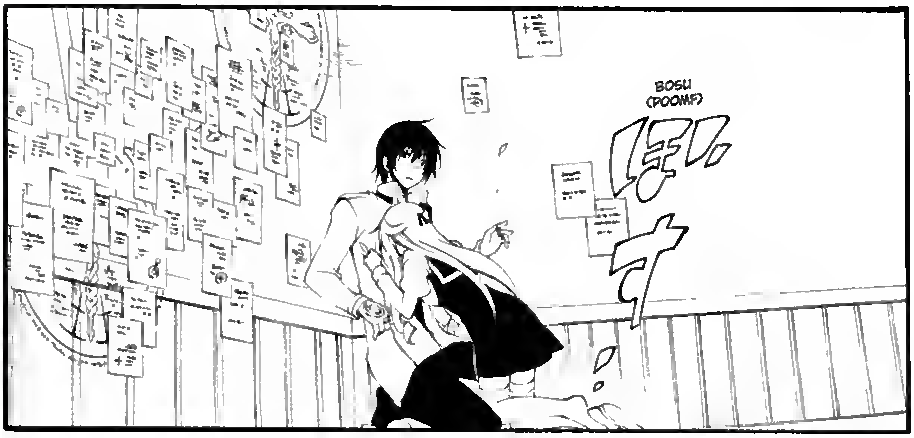



TO ACTIVATE IT, I'D LIKE THE POWER OF THE CHALICE RELIC CURRENTLY IN ARCANA'S COLLECTION.
THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU FOR HELP.
I CAN'T REACH OUT TO TSUZUKI OR KAMUHABURI FOR THIS.
ドクン
DOKUN
DOKUN
ドクン

Y... YEAH.
MORE IMPORTANTLY... ARE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT ALL THIS?
YOU ALL RIGHT!?
YOU KEEP SWOONING

UM...
WHY WOULD I LIE ABOUT SUCH A THING?

KURA (SWAY)
...ACK!
AGAIN!?


BOSU (POOMF)

I'M ABLE TO HAVE HOPE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
TO THINK THERE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE A WAY...
...TO RID MYSELF OF THIS BLACK SEAL...
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT...

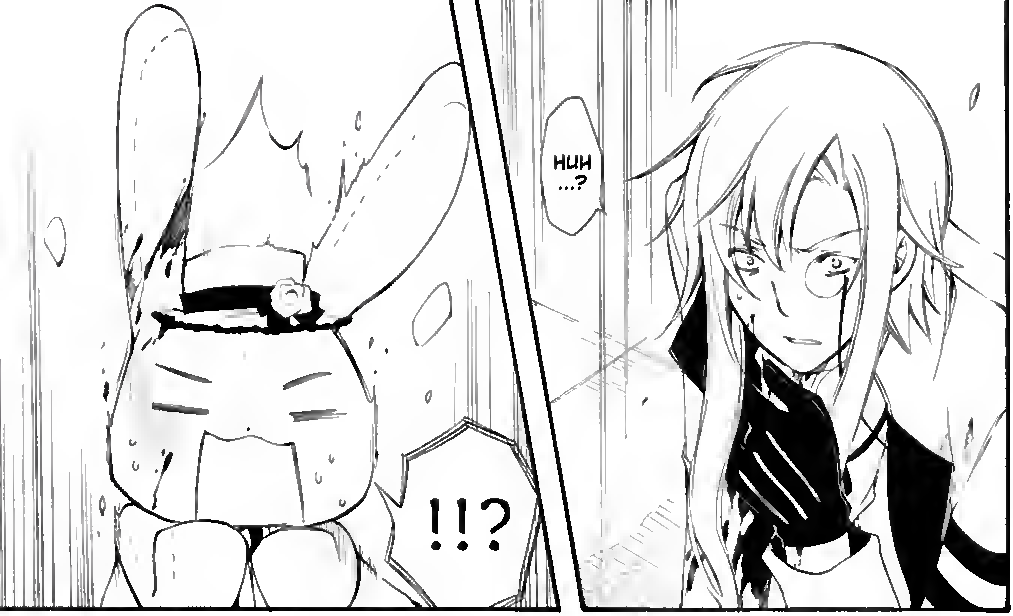
TSU-KI—
WHAT THE...?
TH... THANKS.

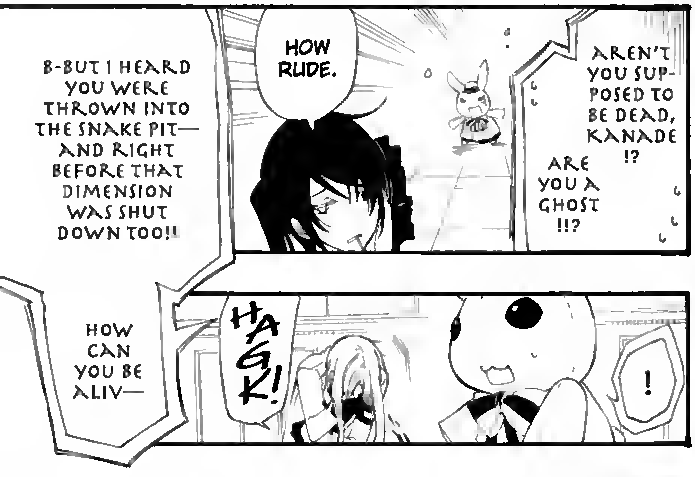
I FEEL SO HAPPY...
PON (PAT)
YEAH.
I SWEAR WE'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN.

THE BUTTERFLY IMP THAT WILL REACTIVATE TSUKIMIYA'S CONDITIONING!
LOOKS LIKE YOU GOT IT ON OKAY!
IT'S IMPRESSIVE— YOU CAN'T TELL SHE'S BEING BRAINWASHED AT ALL!
SHE SEEMS TOTALLY NORMAL!
HO HO.
YES, ISN'T IT INCREDIBLE?
WOO-HOO!!
IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOUR BRILLIANT DIVERSION, MISS MARIANNE.
USING THE INITIAL PROGRAM AS A BASE...
...THIS TIME...
...I REWORKED IT IN SUCH A WAY THAT I CAN MANIPULATE HER WITHOUT HER BEING AWARE OF IT AND WHILE LEAVING HER PERSONALITY INTACT.
THE CULMINATION OF MUCH PAINSTAKING RESEARCH.
BUT WHAT DOES CONCERN ME...
...IS THAT KABBALISTIC SPELL DIAGRAM.

AH.
HELLO? AM I SPEAKING WITH LORD SATSUKI!?
AH, TRUE.
PERHAPS WE OUGHT TO REPORT THIS TO LORD SATSUKI.
HE MENTIONED ERASING THE BLACK SEAL...
PI (BEEP)
PI (BEEP)
...THEN, IF YOU'LL PARDON ME...
DOPA (SPLURT)
...MY.
...!
!!?
GURA (SLUMP)
BISHA (SPLAT)
BISHA

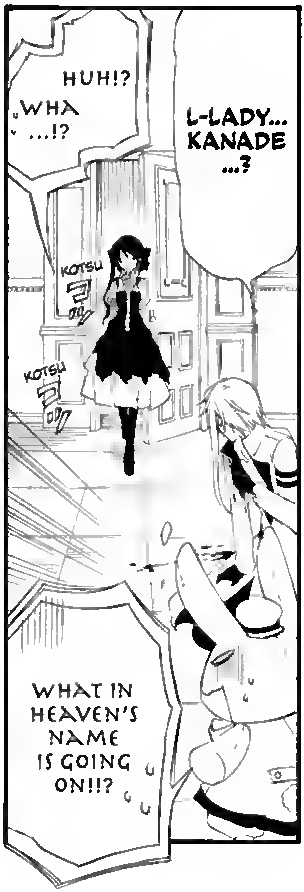
KOTSU
CTOKO
YOU TWO SEEM TO BE HAVING FUN...
MIND IF I JOIN THE PARTY?


HUH ...?
!!?


B-BUT I HEARD YOU WERE THROWN INTO THE SNAKE PIT— AND RIGHT BEFORE THAT DIMENSION WAS SHUT DOWN TOO!!
HOW RUDE.
AREN'T YOU SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD, KANADE !? ARE YOU A GHOST !!?

HOW CAN YOU BE ALIV—
HAGK!
!

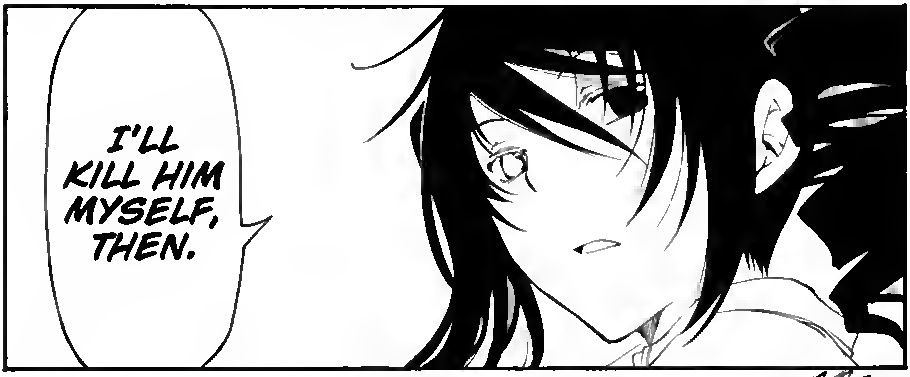
I'LL RELEASE A HEALER BEAST AT ONCE.
H. HANG IN THERE, RIDO.
MUGU CRUNCH
MUGU
F-FORGET THAT FOR NOW! WHY'D YOU SHOOT RIDO!? I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!!
GARI CRUNCH
BORI MNCH


HUH!?
WHA ...!?
L-LADY... KANADE ...?
KOTSU
KOTSU
WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME IS GOING ON!!?

MISS MARIANNE.
IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN A GOOD SHOW.
HUH !?
PUNSUKA (FUME)
WH... WHAT WAS THAT FOR!!?
FUMI (STOMP)
NGRH !?
SO, MISS MARIANNE, WON'T YOU PROVIDE THE ENTERTAIN-MENT...
...AND, IF YOU WOULD, KILL RIDO IN FRONT OF ME? PRETTY PLEASE?
C'MON, RIDO. QUIT GROVEL-ING AND START RUNNING.
IT WON'T BE AS FUN OTHER-WISE.
HEY, HEY.
C'MON, GET UP.
E...
...EX-CUSE ME?
...

HUH !?
AREN'T YOU GOING TO KILL HER ANY-WAY?
HUH...? BUT WHY BOTHER WITH MANIPU-LATION?
WITHOUT RIDO, WE CAN'T MANIPULATE TSUKIMIYA!
WHAT ARE YOU THINK-ING!?
WH... WH...!
STOP IT!
LIVE OUT YOUR SICK FANTASIES IN YOUR DREAMS!!
YOU'RE ACTING SO WEIRD TODAY!!
GUI (TUG)
GUI
GUI
N...NO, NO! YOU AND RIDO ARE ON THE SAME SIDE, REMEMBER?
I CAN'T KILL RIDO! I JUST CAN'T!!
I WON'T DO IT!
PLEASE STOP JOKING AROUND, KANADE!
IS IT REALLY NOT ALL RIGHT?
NO!!
!!
YOU MEAN IT!?
PAA (GLOW)
IF THAT IS WHAT CUTE, DARLING MISS MARIANNE WISHES.
MISS MARI-ANNE...
FINE, VERY WELL.
HAAH... I GUESS IT CAN'T BE HELPED.

PAN
(BLAM)


I'LL KILL HIM MYSELF, THEN.

RIDO!
DA
(DASH)

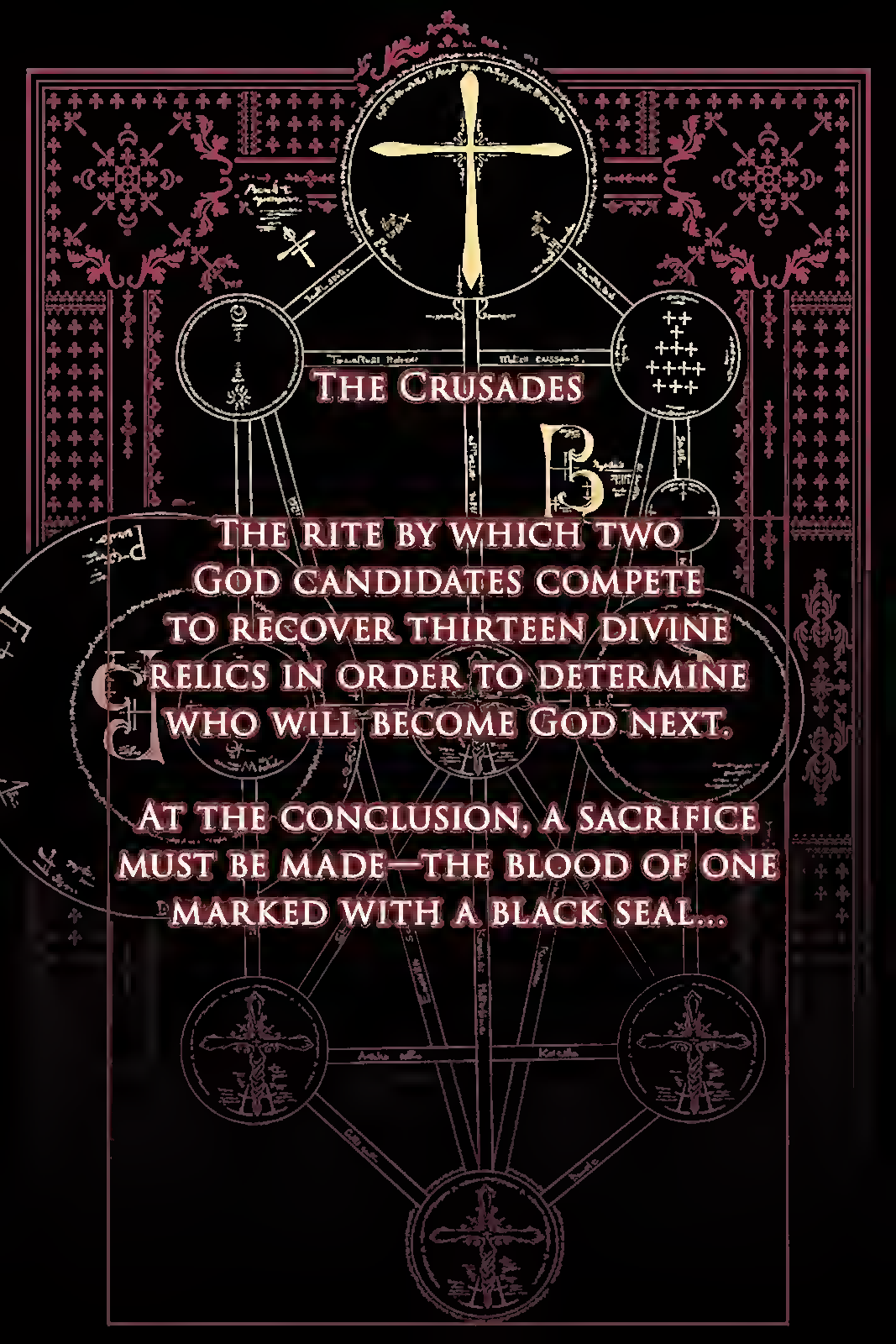
DON
AH
...
AHH
...!
DON
DON
DON
DON
DON
(BANG)
DON
DON

WAAA
THIS CAN'T BE HAP-PEN-ING ...!
NO...
R... RIDO ...?
... HUH.
I REALLY AM ALIVE ...
I'M ALIVE RIGHT NOW, AREN'T I?
WAAAA
DOSA (THUMP)
HAAH.
BUT... ...IF I SHUT MY EYES, I SEE...
...THOSE MEMORIES ...
...FROM THAT DAY... AGAIN AND AGAIN...

GATA
GATA
HFF!
HFF!
GATA
GATA
GATA
GATA (SHAKE)
BAKYA (SMASH)
GNN ...
I WILL NOT...
GIRI (GRIT)
... GH.
GATA
GATA
...FOR-GIVE...
GATA
GATA
GATA
...THE ONES WHO LAID ME LOW LIKE THIS...
I WILL HEAP TENS OF THOUSANDS OF TIMES MORE SUFFERING UPON THEM.
START-ING RIGHT NOW...
...I WILL HUNT DOWN EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM.

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS


The Crusades
The rite by which two God candidates compete to recover thirteen divine relics in order to determine who will become God next.
At the conclusion, a sacrifice must be made—the blood of one marked with a black seal...

Chapter 58
The Chalice

AUE.

Chapter 58
The Chalice

BLOODY CROSS

PACHI (BLINK)
KATSU (TAK)
YOU'VE BEEN AT IT A LONG WHILE, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
!
GATA (CLATTER)
DID YOU SEE A GOOD DEAL?
YES.
...YES, I DID.
THEY WERE QUITE FAVORABLE OVERALL.

IT APPEARS OUR CAREFUL PLANS WILL BEAR OUT THE DESIRED RESULT.
I SHOULD BE GRANTED AN ORACLE BEFORE TOO LONG.
I SAW MYSELF ...
...STANDING AS A FELLOW GOD CANDIDATE AT THE FINAL CRUSADE.
IT LOOKS AS IF...
...WE'VE TRICKED THE CRUSADES.
!
CONGRATULATIONS ON ATTAINING CANDIDATE STATUS.
THANK YOU.
AND HOW ARE PREPARATIONS FOR THE NEXT STAGE?
GOTO (THINK)
ゴト
AH, YES.
HERE THEY ARE, ALL READY FOR USE.

IT WILL RELEASE YOUR SUPPRESSED DEMONIC POWER, YOUR EXCELLENCY.
PLEASE HELP YOURSELF.
SU (SHFF)
JARA (RATTLE)
...ONLY TEMPORARILY.
...SO WE'RE DONE WITH THESE PILLS THAT RELEASE OUR POWER...
I WILL RELAY YOUR AUTHORIZATION TO THE OTHER EMPLOYEES.
...SINCE WE DON'T NEED TO CONTINUE DECEIVING THE OTHER GOD CANDIDATES' EYES.
MIGHT AS WELL STOP STIFLING IT NOW...
MAKINO-KUN.
TAKE ONE YOURSELF.
ZUPU (ZEE)
THE TIME FOR HIDING...
...IS OVER.

A VISION OF THE ALTAR...
THE NEXT CRUSADES ORACLE IS COMING.

NO PENALTIES AGAINST SATSUKI THIS TIME, HUH.
NOT GOING TO PULL ANOTHER SHAMELESS TRICK? NO SWIPING RELICS BEFORE THEIR ORACLE THIS TIME?
I CONSIDERED IT, BUT...
...YOU'RE SO WEAK AND PATHETIC, I FELT BAD ABOUT IT.
YOU...! WHO'RE YOU CALLING WEAK, YOU LOUT!?
TO (THOOM)
POU (GLOW)
INFORMATION ON THE RELICS SET TO APPEAR...
...AND THEIR LOCATIONS.

CRUSADE
FIVE RELICS IN TOTAL.
SO THE NEXT...
...WILL BE THE LAST CRUSADE FOUGHT BETWEEN US.
WHICH ...
...WILL TAKE US TO THE THIR-TEENTH— THE FINAL RELIC.

?
HYUN (WHOOSH)
SUITS ME...
CHAPU (SPLISH)
.....
SO THIS IS THE ORACLE ...
DATA FROM THE CRUSADES CORE...
...FED DIRECTLY INTO THE MINDS OF GOD CANDIDATES ONLY.
WHAT A FASCI-NATING SETUP.

SU (SHFF)
I TOO WAS SUMMONED TO THE CRUSADES.
WHAT? WHAT ELSE?
WHA ...!?
!?
IZUMI!? WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING HERE...?
AS THE THIRD...
...GOD CANDI-DATE.

WHOA ...
WAH!
GURA (TEETER)
GABA (LURCH)
!!?
DO (WHUD)
GASSHAN (CRASH)
DID YOU HAVE A NIGHT-MARE?
...
I...
I'D HEARD ABOUT THE RELIC COPIES, BUT...
HE'S A THIRD GOD CANDI-DATE...?
WHAT'S THAT ALL ABOUT? I'VE NEVER HEARD OF SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPEN-ING...
NNH NNGH
?

I GOT AN ORACLE...
THE NEXT WILL BE THE FINAL CRUSADE.
CONTACT THE MINIONS AND KAMU-HABURI.
...HANA-MURA.
AND SATSUKI WON'T BE OUR ONLY FOE.
IZUMI FROM ARCANA HAS MADE HIMSELF A GOD CANDI-DATE.

GASHA (SMASH)
DAMN ARCANA... AND THEIR MEDDLING.
IZUMI... I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU DID IT, BUT I CAN ONLY ASSUME...
...YOU INTEND TO HIJACK THE CRUSADES TO BECOME GOD YOURSELF.
ROGER! MOMOSE'S ON IT!
MOMOSE. DO SOME DIGGING AT ARCANA. SEE IF YOU CAN FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON.
...HMM.
...I WONDER HOW WELL THAT WILL GO FOR YOU.

YOU'VE REAWAKENED YOUR DEMON NATURE.
I'VE PREPARED FRESH BLOOD TO HELP WITH THE PROCESS.
THANK YOU. I'LL DRINK IT NOW.
...THOUGH...
TSU (SHFF)
...I FIND MYSELF CRAVING STILL FRESHER BLOOD, MY DEAR.
KU (GIP)
...EXQUISITE.
GOOD BLOOD FOR A FIRST QUAFF.
KACHA (CLINK)

ZOKU (SHUDDER)
GIRI (GRIP)
...AHH...
LORD IZUMI...
.....!
KA (CHOMP)
GASHA (CRASH)
AHEM...
YOUR EXCELLENCY... I HAVE A STATUS REPORT?
.....
.....
!
.....
VERY WELL... GO ON.

I'LL BEGIN, THEN.
PI (BEEP)
REGARDING THE DIVINE RELICS...
...WE HAVE COMPLETED COPYING THE EIGHT THAT HAVE MANIFESTED SO FAR.
WE ARE READY TO REPLICATE THE NEXT ONES TOO.
...I BELIEVE THAT PUTS US AHEAD OF BOTH OF THEM.
AND SINCE NEITHER TSUZUKI NOR SATSUKI INDIVIDUALLY HOLD THAT MANY...
SATSUKI: FOUR RELICS
TSUZUKI: FOUR RELICS
WE CAN MAKE A COPY OF A RELIC...
...IF WE JUST KEEP NEAR IT FOR A FEW SECONDS ...
LONG ENOUGH TO GATHER ITS DATA WITH OUR SCANNER.
COLLECTING ALL OF THE REMAINING RELICS IN THE NEXT CRUSADE WOULD BE IDEAL... BUT...
...IT IS NO SERIOUS CONCERN IF WE DON'T.
...THEN WE'LL NEED TO OBTAIN THE SACRIFICIAL BLOOD OF EITHER BLACK SEAL, TOKIWA OR TSUKIMIYA...
...AND PREVENT TSUZUKI AND SATSUKI FROM GATHERING ALL OF THE REAL RELICS TO ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER.
THIS WILL GUARANTEE OUR VICTORY.
EXCELLENT.
IT SOUNDS AS IF EVERYTHING IS PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY.
I'M GLAD.
PACHI (CLAP) PACHI

...THAT RIVALS EVEN THE GOD CANDIDATES ...
I HAVE POWER...
THE POWER OF A PURE DEMON... ONE WHO COMMANDS AN ARMY OF DEMON-FOLK.
BUT THE OTHER TWO CANDI-DATES...
CERTAINLY THEY WILL NOT LEAVE YOU TO IT, NOW THAT YOU'RE IN THE RUNNING YOURSELF.
WE CAN EXPECT A GREAT DEAL OF INTER-FERENCE FROM THEM BOTH.
...IN-DEED.
THOUGH THAT IS ITSELF PART OF THE THRILL OF THE CRU-SADES.
WE SHALL EVADE THEM.
KOO CHHOOO
WHAT'S MORE...
...I HAVE THIS... A MOST POWERFUL DIVINE RELIC...
THE CHAL-ICE.

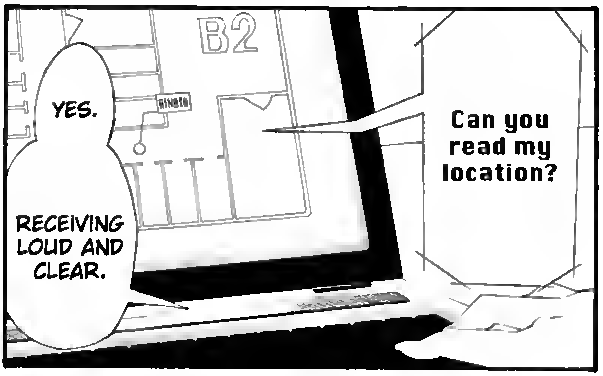
NOW, MY FELLOW DEMONS.
...I HAVE RECEIVED THAT LONG-AWAITED ORACLE.
KATSU (TAK)
AT MIDNIGHT, THREE DAYS HENCE...
...THE FINAL FETE WE'VE LONG LOOKED FORWARD TO SHALL BEGIN.
KATSU
KATSU
GISHI (CREAK)
AT WHICH TIME...
...I EXPECT TO BECOME GOD.

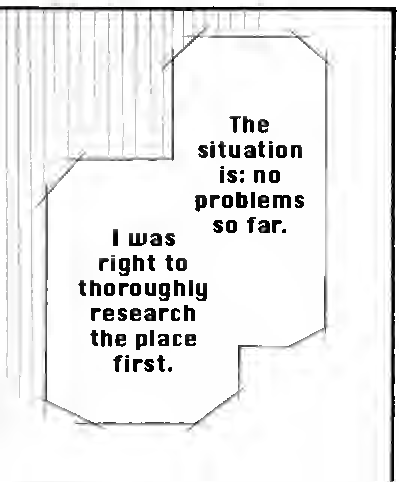
BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

...NOW THEN...
...ARE THINGS GOING WELL ON YOUR END?

IF YOU'RE NOT TOO BUSY AT THE MOMENT, CAN YOU PLEASE GIVE ME AN UPDATE, HINATA?


B2
HINATA
Can you read my location?
YES.
RECEIVING LOUD AND CLEAR.


The situation is: no problems so far.
I was right to thoroughly research the place first.

Chapter 59
Exposé

...ROGER. I CAN FIDDLE WITH THE SECURITY CAMERAS, BUT...
...THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN DO FROM MY END IF YOU RUN INTO SOMEONE.
BUTSU
BUTSU (MUTTER)
BUTSU
...Geez, this would go so much better if I were the one sneaking in and you were supporting me...
I CAN HEAR YOU, BLACK SEAL.
OKAY.
KYU (TUG)
THIS DISGUISE SHOULD HELP ME BLEND IN
...so try your best not to be discovered.
It's definitely in your best interests not to start anything ...
Tch...
I know. That's why I decided to do the responsible, adult thing and stay behind to assist you.
"ADULT"?
FINE. COME IF YOU DON'T MIND GETTING SACRIFICED.
MARCH RIGHT INTO ARCANA, WHERE LORD IZUMI, NEWLY PROMOTED THIRD GOD CANDIDATE, WOULD BE HAPPY TO RECEIVE YOU.
...HAAH.
LET'S GO OVER THE PLAN AGAIN, SHALL WE?

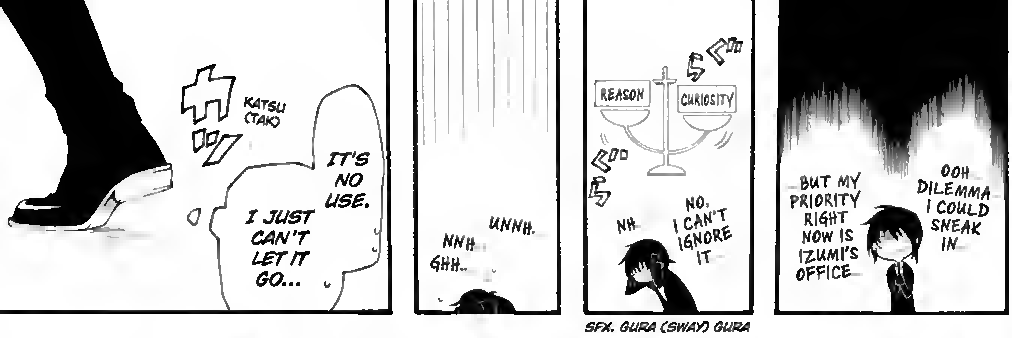
AND THEN ...
...YOU STEAL THE CHALICE OF CREATION HE'S HIDDEN THERE.
...THAT ABOUT RIGHT?
YOU INFILTRATE ARCANA FROM UNDER-GROUND...
...THEN TAKE A COVERT ROUTE...
...TO PRESIDENT IZUMI'S OFFICE.
TARGET: ISF OFFICE
NOW AT B2
...WE'VE BEEN SPYING ON THEM FOR THREE DAYS NOW...
SINCE HACKING INTO ARCANA'S SECURITY SYSTEM...
ISF
.....
DEFI-NITELY.
...but his office is the most likely.
if it's not there, I've identified three other possible spots...
...OF THAT OFFICE.
...AND THERE'S BEEN NOTICEABLY LITTLE FOOT TRAFFIC IN OR OUT...
ONE DAY EAR-LIER
...I JUST GOT A CALL FROM TSUZUKI.
SEEMS THE ORACLE WAS BESTOWED UPON IZUMI, SO HE'S IN THE RUNNING NOW TOO.
ACCORDING TO THAT ORACLE, ALL OF THE REMAINING FIVE RELICS WILL MANIFEST IN THE NEXT CRUSADE...
...MAKING IT THE FINAL CRUSADE OF THIS CYCLE...
TON (TAP)
5
REMAIN
MAGMA ALL 6 CORPSES
SAISUKI
TSUZUKI

ANYWAY...
...THAT'S WHAT THE GOD CANDIDATES ARE CONCERNING THEMSELVES WITH.
SO OUR GOAL ISN'T WINNING THE CRUSADE...
...BUT NABBING THE CHALICE IN IZUMI'S POSSESSION... HUH.
YUP.
THE CHALICE IS ARCANA'S TRUMP CARD...
...TO COUNTER THE OTHER TWO GOD CANDIDATES.
THUS, IZUMI IS PROBABLY EXTRA ALERT AGAINST ATTEMPTS TO TAKE IT.
AND...
...LOOKING AT IZUMI'S MOVEMENTS...
...FROM THE MOMENT HE RECEIVED THE ORACLE, HE'S BEEN MEETING WITH PEOPLE AND ISSUING ORDERS NONSTOP.
IT'S TOO RISKY FOR HIM TO KEEP THE CHALICE ON HIM...
...WITH THIS MANY PEOPLE BUZZING AROUND.
HE'S GOTTA HAVE IT STASHED SOMEWHERE SAFE...
THAT BEING THE CASE...
...HIS OFFICE IS PRETTY MUCH THE MOST LIKELY HIDING SPOT.
DON (BOOM)
.....
ZU (SLURP)
...YOU THINK...?
YOU DON'T THINK HE'D KEEP SOMETHING SO PRECIOUS CLOSE BY?
I WOULD
...HEY, YOU'RE HURTIN' MY FEELINGS.

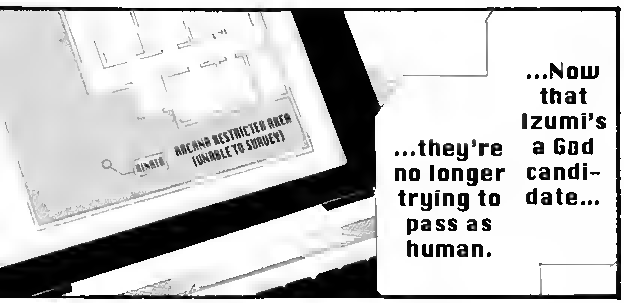
HE'S WORSE OFF CARRYING IT AROUND.
HE WOULD.
...HAS JUST TWISTED THE CRUSADES' STRUCTURE AND BECOME A GOD CANDIDATE.
IZUMI...
WITH SO MANY PEOPLE COMING AND GOING...
...HE WOULDN'T LEAVE IT LYING AROUND FOR FEAR OF AN ATTACK.
HE'S ON GUARD AGAINST THE OTHER GOD CANDIDATES, RIGHT?
...AND BY THE DAY OF THE EVENT, HE'D BE EXHAUSTED.
CARRYING IT AROUND WOULD WEAR HIS NERVES RAGGED...
KIRI (COLD)
KIRI
UNH... NAUSEA, DIZZINESS, ABDOMINAL PAIN...
EVERY TIME HE MEETS SOMEONE, HE WONDERS, "IS THIS A FOE IN DISGUISE? OR A SPY?"
...WHICH MAKES HIM EVEN MORE ANXIOUS.
SATSUKI ENEMY
TSUZUKI ENEMY
SOWA (FIDGET)
SOWA
KAMIHABUKI ENEMY
HELLO
I'M AN ALLY
BIKU
BIKU (FLINCH)
HE'S ON EDGE, KNOWING HE COULD BE ATTACKED AT ANY TIME.
WELL, EITHER WAY...
MM...
LESS STRESS AND MORE EFFICIENT.
...AND TIGHTEN SECURITY ON BOTH HIMSELF AND THE CHALICE.
IT'D BE BETTER FOR HIM TO LOCK IT UP SOMEWHERE...

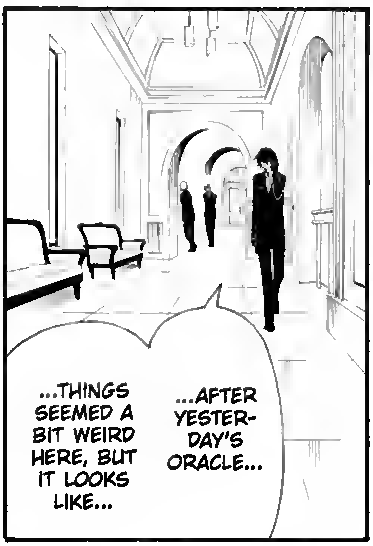
PANYA (CRUNCH)
HM ...?
A SY-RINGE?
...OUR BEST CHANCE TO STEAL IT IS JUST BEFORE THEY FINISH PREPPING FOR THE CRUSADES...
...WHEN IZUMI GOES TO RETRIEVE IT...
GI (CREAK)
ZORO
ZORO (PLOD)
A-RANK EMPLOYEES ONLY BEYOND THIS POINT
A TOP SECRET AREA WITH CAMERAS WE COULDN'T HACK...
ARE THEY DOING DRUGS INSIDE ARCANA?
USU (CSHT)
...TO AID LORD IZUMI ...

MEKI
MEKI
MEKI
MEKI
MEKI (KRAK!)
WHA ...!!?
...TO SERVE ...
...HIS EXCEL-LENCY, LORD IZUMI...
OUR DEAREST WISH... FINALLY GRANTED... HIS EXCEL-LENCY SHALL LEAD US AND BECOME GOD.
WE NO LONGER NEED TO REMAIN HUMAN...
THE HECK? WHAT'S GOING O—
.....
.....
HASN'T BLOWN HIS COVER YET
HINATA
ZORO (PLOD)



SFX. GURA (SWAY) GURA

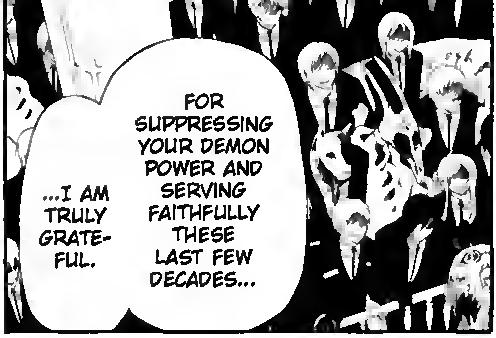




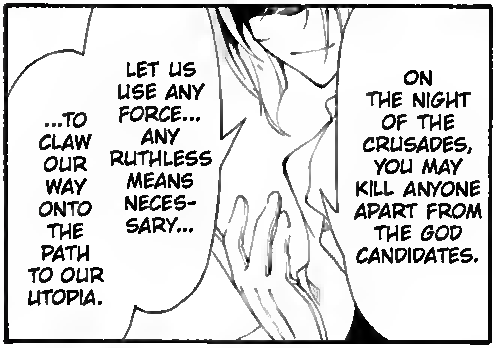
MY LORD!
LORD IZUMI!
WAAAAAAAA (ROARRRR)

WAAAAAAAH
GROARRRR!

MY LORD!
LORD IZUMI!


...I AM TRULY GRATEFUL.
FOR SUPPRESSING YOUR DEMON POWER AND SERVING FAITHFULLY THESE LAST FEW DECADES...

...MY DEAR FELLOW DEMONS, REJOICE.
TWO DAYS HENCE... OUR LONG-DESIRED INCLUSION AS PARTICIPANTS IN THE CRUSADES SHALL BECOME A REALITY.

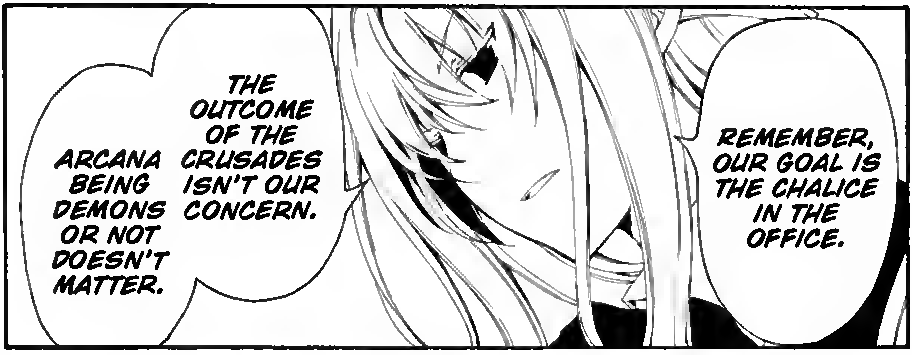

...TO CLAW OUR WAY ONTO THE PATH TO OUR UTOPIA.
LET US USE ANY FORCE... ANY RUTHLESS MEANS NECESSARY...
ON THE NIGHT OF THE CRUSADES, YOU MAY KILL ANYONE APART FROM THE GOD CANDIDATES.

WAAAAAAA (ROARRR)
ONCE THE CRUSADES ARE WON...
...THE WORLD WILL BE A DEMON PARADISE.

MY LORD!
...
ARCANA... I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DETECT LIES, BUT...
...I HAD NO CLUE THEY WERE DEMONS.

MY LORD!
HURRAH, LORD IZUMI!

HINATA, DON'T PROBE ANY FURTHER.
JUST GRAB THE RELIC AND COME BACK.
THE BEST PLAN IS NOT TO ENGAGE THEM.
WHICH MEANS THEY'RE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO FOOL ME.
GIRI (GRIT)
...
TCH.


REMEMBER, OUR GOAL IS THE CHALICE IN THE OFFICE.
THE OUTCOME OF THE CRUSADES ISN'T OUR CONCERN.
ARCANA BEING DEMONS OR NOT DOESN'T MATTER.

Our objective is to disrupt the Crusades...
...not come out on top and win the thing.

.....HEY.
I'LL GET BACK ON TRACK ...
THE SHOCK OF IT ALL DIS-TRACTED ME.
NO... YOU'RE RIGHT. SORRY.
...YEAH.

CRAP!
SOMEONE I KNOW!
GAH!
MAKI-NO!!
JA CHACHAN
WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE...
... THIEF?
THAT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A DISGUISE?

AH!
YOU BAS-TARD !!
DA CRASH!
RAN
GAAN? (SHOCK)

OH!
ANOTHER INTRUDER!

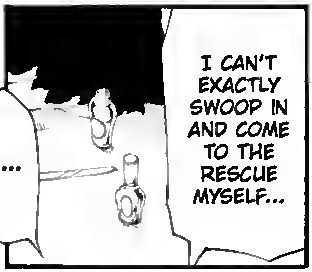
UH... UM...
HUH ...?
WHAT AM I...?
UM...
SHOOT
SHOOT SHOOT
SHOOT

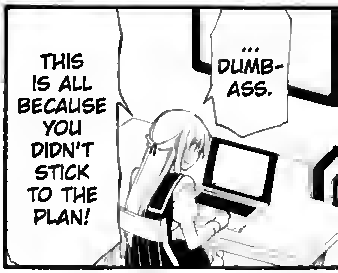
I KNOW!
I'LL WORK ON THAT LATER—
Hey...! That's not where the exit is!

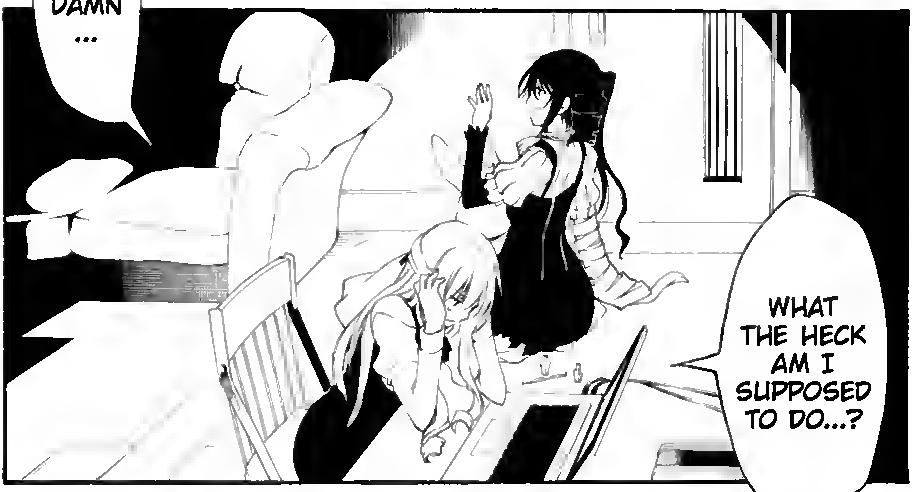
BUN (SLASH)
...!!
GAKI! (CLANG)
.....
UNH!!
THAT WAS FREAKY
HFF ...
HFF ...
GORI (PRESS)
...YOU IDIOT.

PREY THAT CREEPS SO WILLINGLY INTO A DEN OF DEMONS WON'T SO EASILY ESCAPE.
SATAN (SHUT)
IT'S...!

FWOO


...
I CAN'T EXACTLY SWOOP IN AND COME TO THE RESCUE MYSELF...


THIS IS ALL BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T STICK TO THE PLAN!
...DUMB-ASS.


...DAMN...
WHAT THE HECK AM I SUPPOSED TO DO...?

BLOODY CROSS

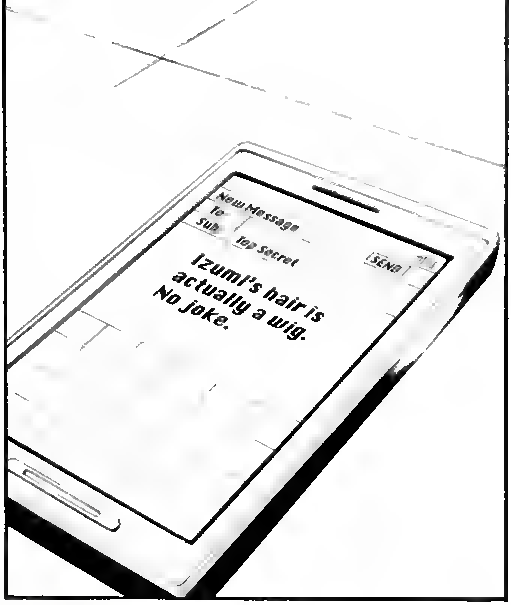
BLOODY CROSS

HIRA
LOOK.
SEE?
HIRA (WAVE)
IT'S LIKE SHE CAN'T SEE US AT ALL.
PROOF THAT RIDO'S CONDITIONING REMAINS.
AH HA!
HOW AMUS-ING. ♥

ARGH, THIS IS REALLY BAD...
AND AFTER HINATA SMOOTHLY INFIL-TRATED ARCANA ...
...I THOUGHT THE CHALICE WOULD BE OURS IF WE COULD JUST GET HIM TO THE OFFICE...

Chapter 60
Declaration of War

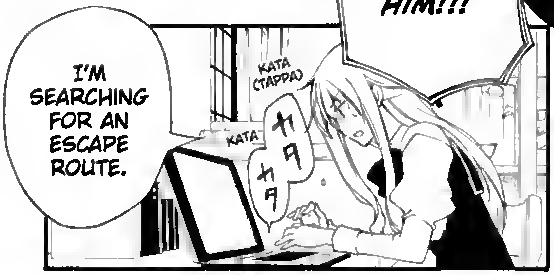
GAN (SHOCK)
THAT'S ABSURD !!!


New Message
To:
Sub: top secret
SEND
Izumi's hair is actually a wig.
No joke.

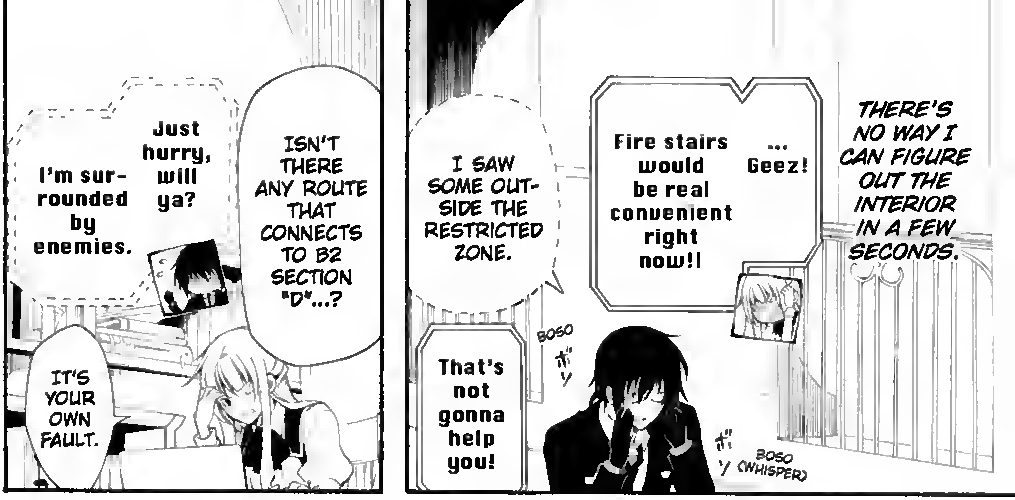
.....
ACTUALLY, I JUST...
IT'S A LIE!!
HOW COULD YOU ...?
HOW!? I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
Y-Y-Y-YOU... WHA... WHAT ...?

YOU KEEP AN EYE ON HIM!!!
YOU GOTTA BE KIDDING MEEEE!
I GOTTA GO ERASE IT!!

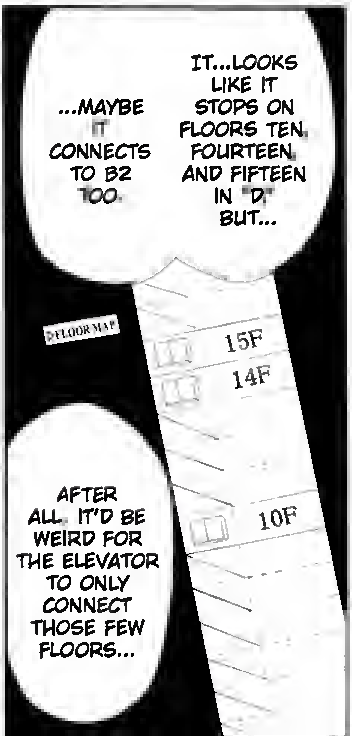
...FROM YOUR ACCOUNT ...
...E-MAILED THIS TO THE ENTIRE COMPANY...
HYOOO (WHOOSH)

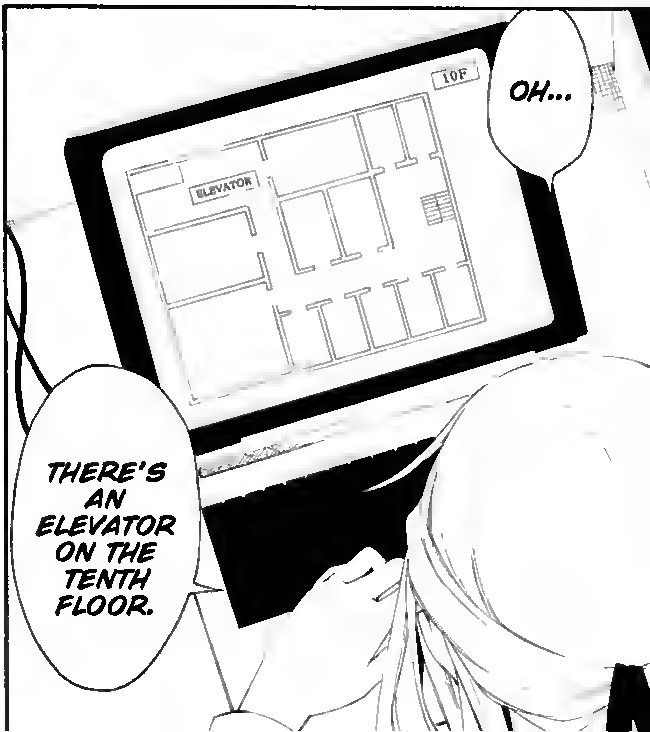

I'M SEARCHING FOR AN ESCAPE ROUTE.
KATA (TAPPA)
KATA
カタ
カタ

AND I DON'T HAVE THE INTEL TO FIND ANOTHER WAY IN OR OUT.
TO THE BACK
HINATA
RESTRICTED AREA EXIT
...BUT SINCE HINATA RAN DEEPER INTO THE FACILITY TO ESCAPE THE ENEMY, RETURNING TO THE ENTRANCE WILL BE DIFFICULT.

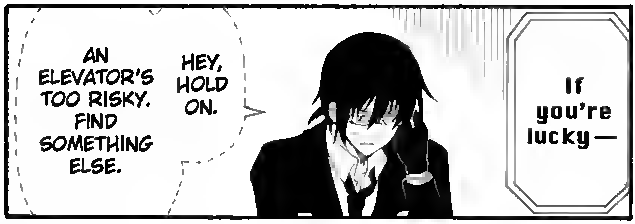

I'm surrounded by enemies.
Just hurry, will ya?
ISN'T THERE ANY ROUTE THAT CONNECTS TO B2 SECTION "D"...?
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT.
I SAW SOME OUTSIDE THE RESTRICTED ZONE.
Fire stairs would be real convenient right now!!
... Geez!
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN FIGURE OUT THE INTERIOR IN A FEW SECONDS.
That's not gonna help you!
BOSO
BOSO (WHISPER)

...HM?

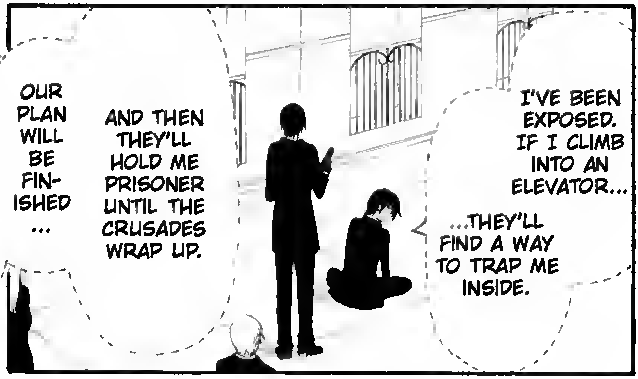

...MAYBE IT CONNECTS TO B2 TOO.
IT...LOOKS LIKE IT STOPS ON FLOORS TEN, FOURTEEN, AND FIFTEEN IN "D" BUT...
FLOOR MAP
15F
14F
10F
AFTER ALL, IT'D BE WEIRD FOR THE ELEVATOR TO ONLY CONNECT THOSE FEW FLOORS...


OH...
10F
ELEVATOR
THERE'S AN ELEVATOR ON THE TENTH FLOOR.

...YOU KNOW, FIFTEEN IS WHERE THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE IS, SO...
...MAYBE IT'S A DIRECT EXECUTIVE ELEVATOR TO THE B2 TOP SECRET AREA.
IT'S NEAR WHERE YOU ARE RIGHT NOW.
JUST GO A LITTLE FARTHER IN AND TURN RIGHT AT THE END OF THE HALL.


If you're lucky—
HEY, HOLD ON.
AN ELEVATOR'S TOO RISKY. FIND SOMETHING ELSE.

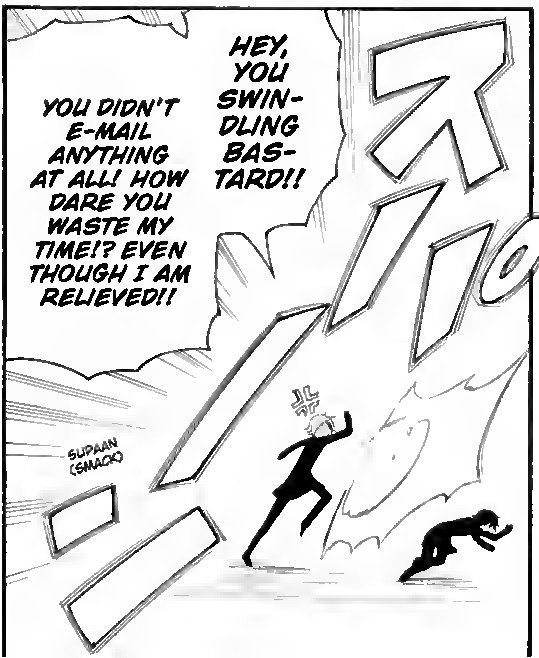
...YOU SAY THAT, BUT...
...THE ONLY OTHER WAY OUT OF THERE AS FAR I CAN SEE IS THE ENTRANCE YOU CAME IN THROUGH.
HMPH...


I'VE BEEN EXPOSED. IF I CLIMB INTO AN ELEVATOR...
...THEY'LL FIND A WAY TO TRAP ME INSIDE.
AND THEN THEY'LL HOLD ME PRISONER UNTIL THE CRUSADES WRAP UP.
OUR PLAN WILL BE FINISHED ...
...and you'll be sacrificed.

GOODNESS.
Isn't there a better option ...?
LISTENING IN ON PLOTS THAT ARE OF NO CONSEQUENCE TO ME IS UNBELIEVABLY BORING... SO...

BESIDES, YOU'RE THE ONE WHO IGNORED THE PLAN AND RUSHED IN THERE—
I'm sorry! I'm really sorry!
YAWN...
GYAA (BICKER) GYAA

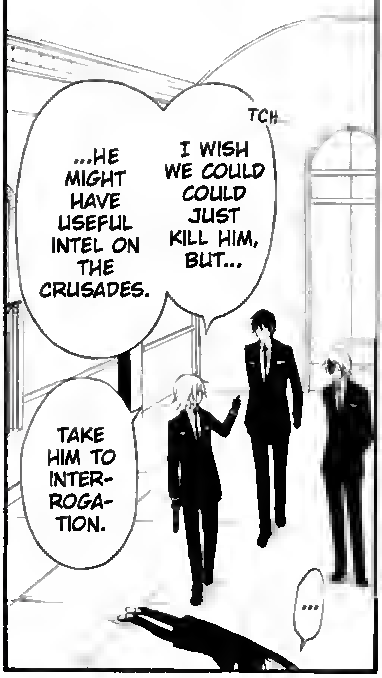
POWER OFF
...LET'S END THIS.
BUCHIN (CLICK)

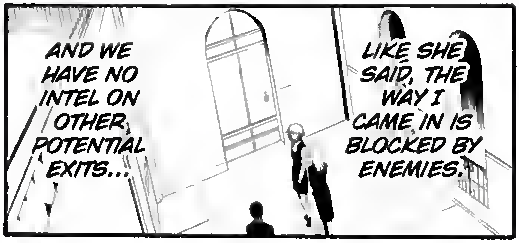

HEY, YOU SWINDLING BASTARD!!
YOU DIDN'T E-MAIL ANYTHING AT ALL! HOW DARE YOU WASTE MY TIME!? EVEN THOUGH I AM RELIEVED!!
SUPAAN (SMACK)

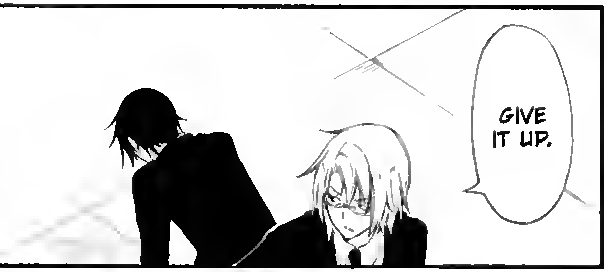
TSUUU (BOOP)
TSUU
HUH ...?

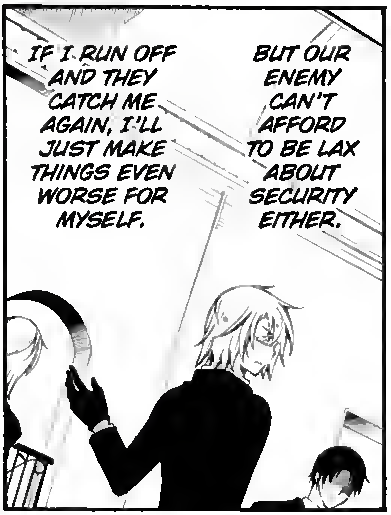
SUTA
SUTA
SUTA (TMP)
SUTA
HEY... HELLO? HELLO!?
HEY!
DID WE LOSE THE SIGNAL? NOT NOW...!

SHE MAKES IT SOUND EASY.
JUST GO A LITTLE FARTHER IN AND TURN RIGHT AT THE END OF THE HALL.
...MAYBE IT CONNECTS TO B2 TOO.


TCH
I WISH WE COULD COULD JUST KILL HIM, BUT...
...HE MIGHT HAVE USEFUL INTEL ON THE CRUSADES.
TAKE HIM TO INTER-ROGA-TION.
...

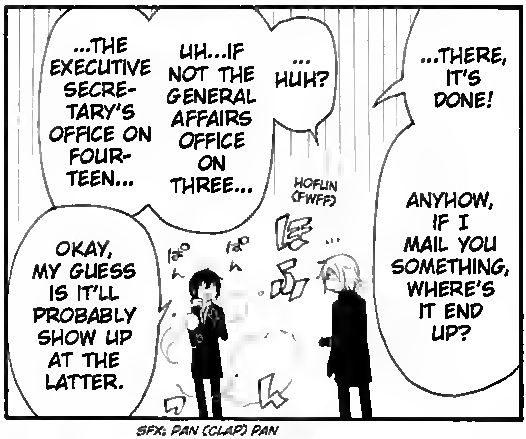

AND WE HAVE NO INTEL ON OTHER POTENTIAL EXITS...
LIKE SHE SAID, THE WAY I CAME IN IS BLOCKED BY ENEMIES.


GIVE IT UP.

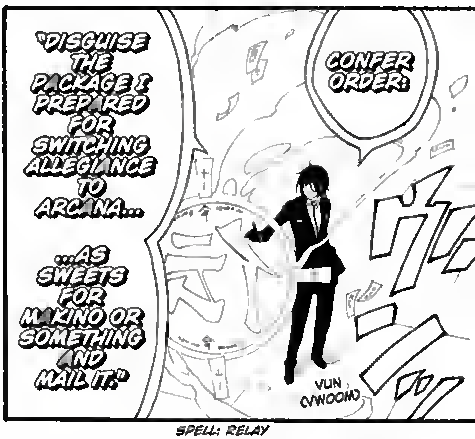

IF I RUN OFF AND THEY CATCH ME AGAIN, I'LL JUST MAKE THINGS EVEN WORSE FOR MYSELF.
BUT OUR ENEMY CAN'T AFFORD TO BE LAX ABOUT SECURITY EITHER.

.....
HAAH.

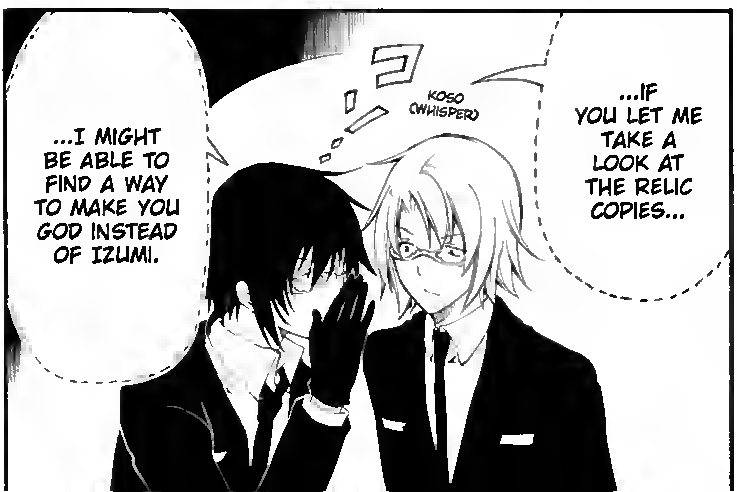
MY ONLY OPTION IS TO GIVE IN.
...YOU'RE RIGHT.

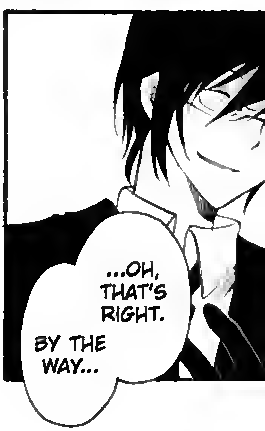

...THE EXECUTIVE SECRE-TARY'S OFFICE ON FOUR-TEEN...
UH...IF NOT THE GENERAL AFFAIRS OFFICE ON THREE...
... HUH?
...THERE, IT'S DONE!
HOFUN (FWFF)
OKAY, MY GUESS IS IT'LL PROBABLY SHOW UP AT THE LATTER.
ANYHOW, IF I MAIL YOU SOMETHING, WHERE'S IT END UP?

SFX: PAN (CLAP) PAN


"DISGUISE THE PACKAGE I PREPARED FOR SWITCHING ALLEGIANCE TO ARCANA...
...AS SWEETS FOR MAKINO OR SOMETHING AND MAIL IT."
CONFER ORDER!
VUN (VWOOM)

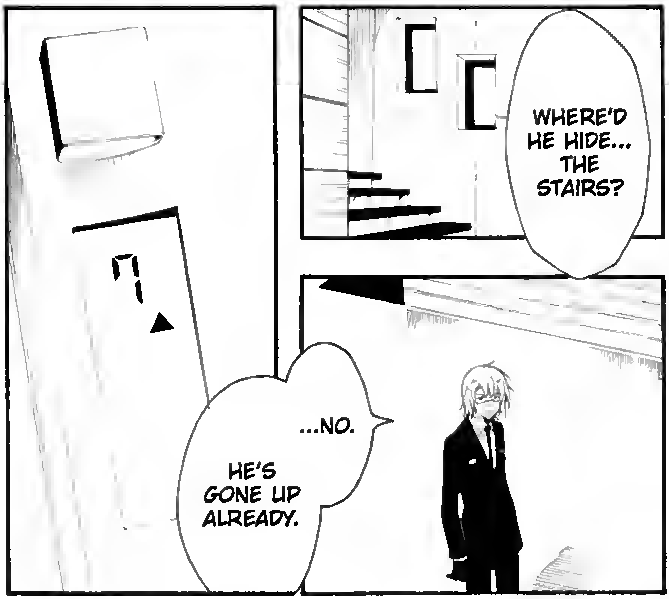
SPELL: RELAY





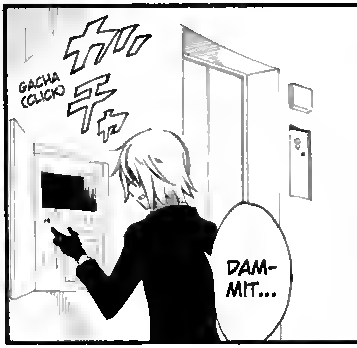
IRA (IRK)
...DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY.
THE MOUTH ON THIS GUY
BASHI (SLAP)
HUH?
PARA (FLUTTER)
PARA
DON'T LET HIM LEAVE THIS AREA ...!!
SEAL ALL THE EXITS!
NO, IT'S A DUMMY !?
GAAA (SNARL)
THAT BAS-TARD !!
THAT'S THE DIRECTION OF THE ELEVATOR ...!

TA (TMP)


WHERE'D HE HIDE... THE STAIRS?
...NO.
HE'S GONE UP ALREADY.

TCH...

DON'T OPEN THE DOORS.
Yes, sir.
IT'S MAKINO.
STOP THE EXECUTIVE ELEVATOR IN "D," STAT.

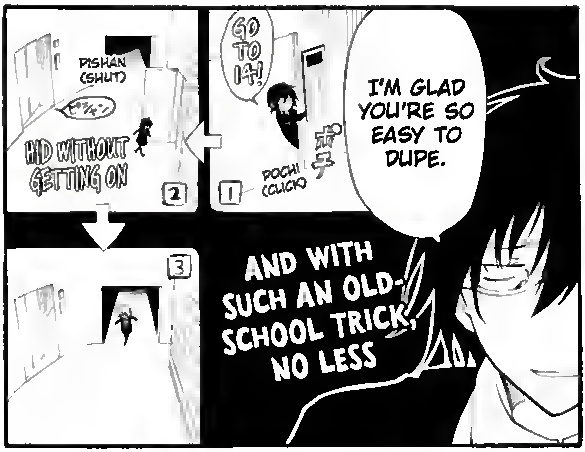

GACHA CACHO
DAM-MIT...

We stopped it between floors eight and nine.
...EXCELLENT. HOLD IT THERE FOR THE TIME BEING.
PI (BEEP)
YOUR EXCELLENCY, SORRY TO BOTHER YOU.
A RAT HAS BEEN NOSING AROUND THE RESTRICTED AREA.
GATAN (CLUNK)
DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO DISPOSE OF...
...ONE OF THE ELEVATORS IN "D"?
...YES. ABSOLUTELY. RIGHT AWAY...
...I HAVE LORD IZUMI'S PERMISSION.

GYURURURU (WHIRRRR)
PI (BEEP)
5
83
DON (WHAMM)
LET IT DROP.

PI
SEND PERSONNEL TO THE BOTTOM OF THE ELEVATOR SHAFT.
THERE MAY BE FIRE, SO GET DOWN THERE RIGHT AWAY.
SHUUUUU (FZZZSH)
Roger.

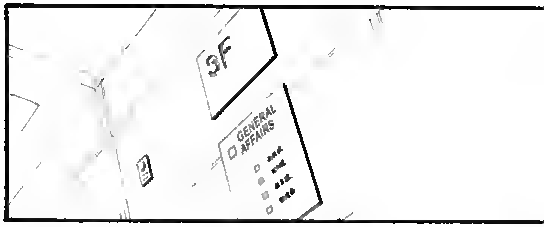
...OH.
AND JUST IN CASE, REINFORCE THE SECURITY ON THE RELIC COPIES.
LEAVE A FEW GUARDS HERE AND REDISTRIBUTE THE REST TO THE RELICS.
ONCE THE ASSEMBLY IS OVER...
...I'LL HAVE MORE PERSONNEL AT LIBERTY TO ASSIST UP THERE...
...AS SWEETS FOR MAKINO OR SOMETHING AND MAIL IT.
UH...IF NOT THE GENERAL AFFAIRS OFFICE... THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S OFFICE ON FOURTEEN...
.....
.....I HAVE TO GO UP TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S OFFICE ON FOURTEEN TO CHECK ON A PACKAGE ADRESSED TO ME.
A SUSPICIOUS OBJECT MIGHT'VE BEEN DELIVERED
.....
.....
KOSO (SNEAK)
KOSO
GACHA (KACHAK)
STAIRS TO FLOOR 14 THIS SUCKS
IT'S DANGEROUS TO USE THE ELEVATOR RIGHT NOW
TON
TON (TMP)


PISHAN (SHUT)
HID WITHOUT GETTING ON
2
GO TO IT!
POCHI (CLICK)
1
I'M GLAD YOU'RE SO EASY TO DUPE.
3
AND WITH SUCH AN OLD-SCHOOL TRICK, NO LESS

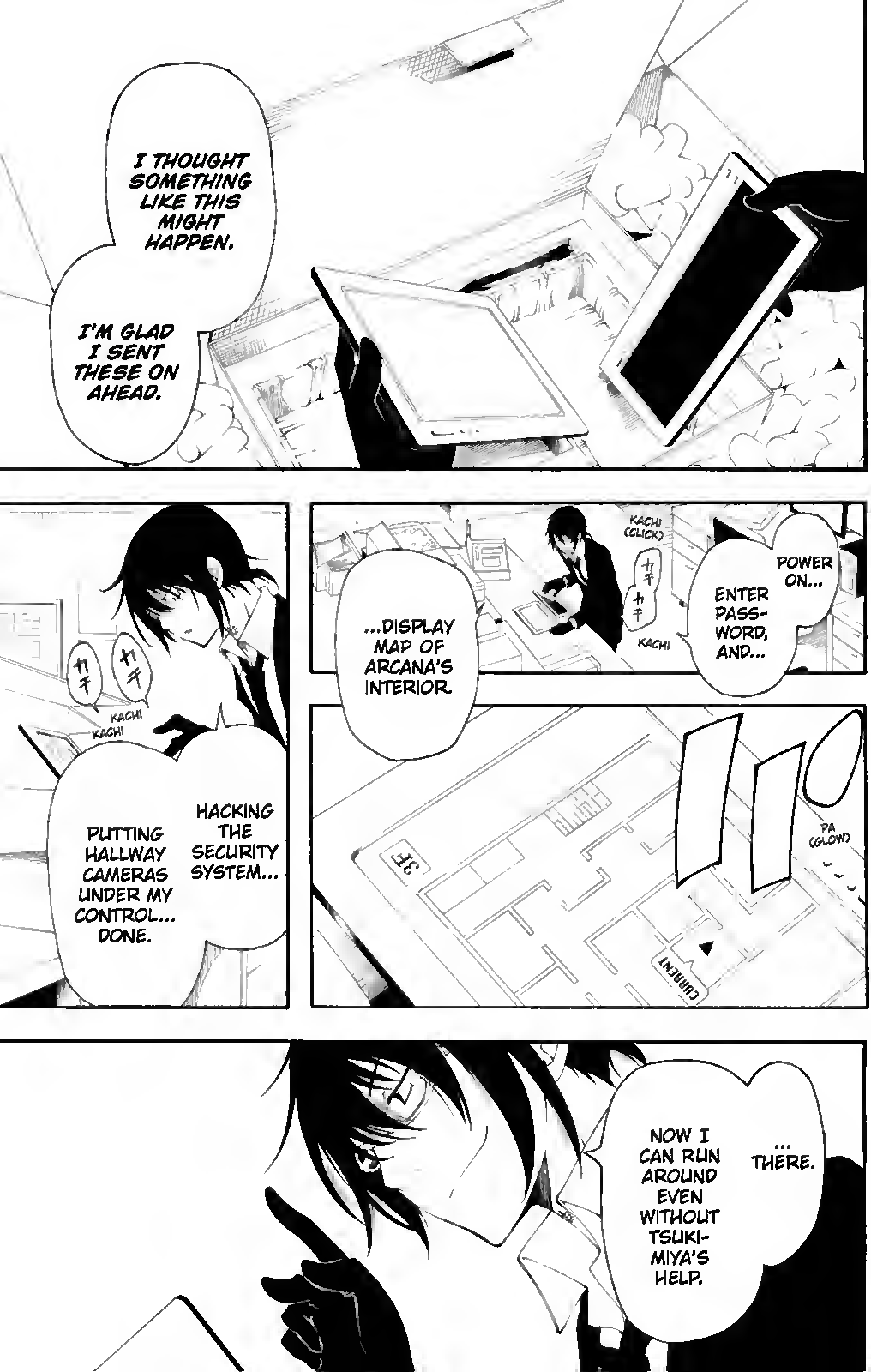
TA (TMP) TA
WHEW...
MAN, THANKS A BUNCH, MAKINO-KUN.
YOU EVEN REDUCED THE NUMBER OF GUARDS.

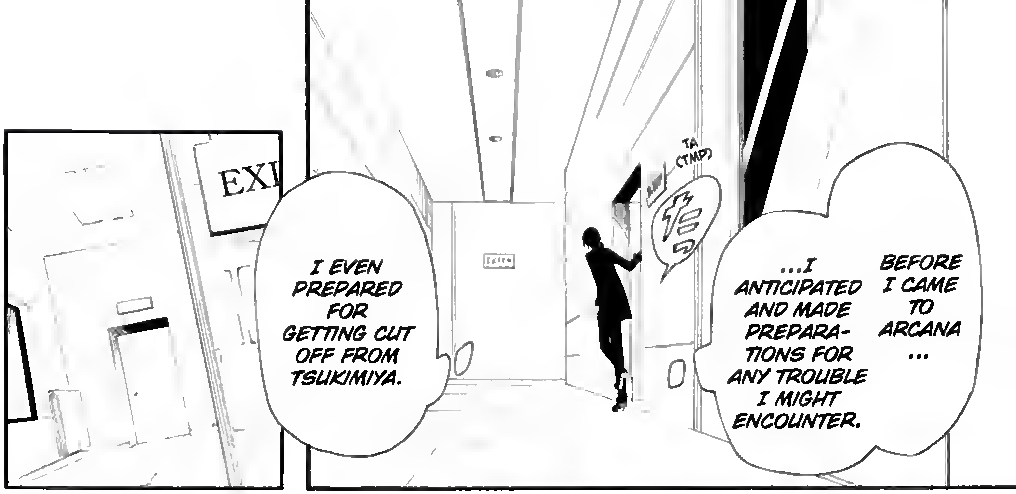
...NOW... I THINK...
...I'LL GO TO THE GENERAL AFFAIRS OFFICE ON THREE.

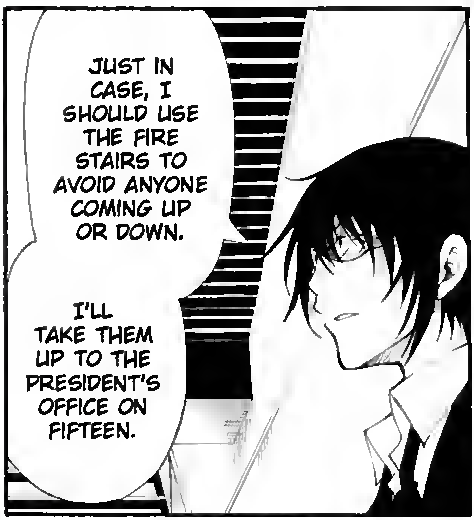
GASA
UNKNOWN ADDRESSEE
CONFIRM
PRECISION EQUIPMENT
HERE IT IS!


3F
GENERAL AFFAIRS

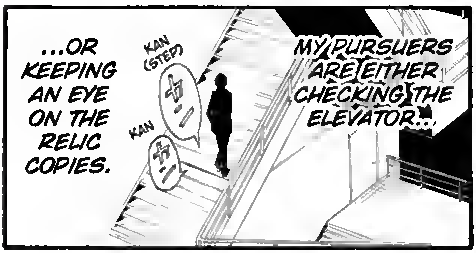
AH.
GASA (RUSTLE)
GOSO (RUMMAGE)


I THOUGHT SOMETHING LIKE THIS MIGHT HAPPEN.
I'M GLAD I SENT THESE ON AHEAD.
KACHI KACHI
HACKING THE SECURITY SYSTEM...
PUTTING HALLWAY CAMERAS UNDER MY CONTROL... DONE.
KACHI (CLICK)
KACHI
POWER ON... ENTER PASS-WORD, AND...
...DISPLAY MAP OF ARCANA'S INTERIOR.
3F
CURRENT
PA (GLOW)
NOW I CAN RUN AROUND EVEN WITHOUT TSUKI-MIYA'S HELP.
... THERE.


EXI
I EVEN PREPARED FOR GETTING CUT OFF FROM TSUKIMIYA.
...I ANTICIPATED AND MADE PREPARATIONS FOR ANY TROUBLE I MIGHT ENCOUNTER.
BEFORE I CAME TO ARCANA ...
TA (TMP)


JUST IN CASE, I SHOULD USE THE FIRE STAIRS TO AVOID ANYONE COMING UP OR DOWN.
I'LL TAKE THEM UP TO THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE ON FIFTEEN.

GACHA GACHAN
ガチャ ガチャン


...OR KEEPING AN EYE ON THE RELIC COPIES.
KAN (STEP)
KAN
MY PURSUERS ARE EITHER CHECKING THE ELEVATOR...

HUH? THERE AREN'T SWEETS FOR ME...
MAKINO JUST THEN
MAKINO IS LIKELY LOOKING THROUGH MAIL ON FOURTEEN.

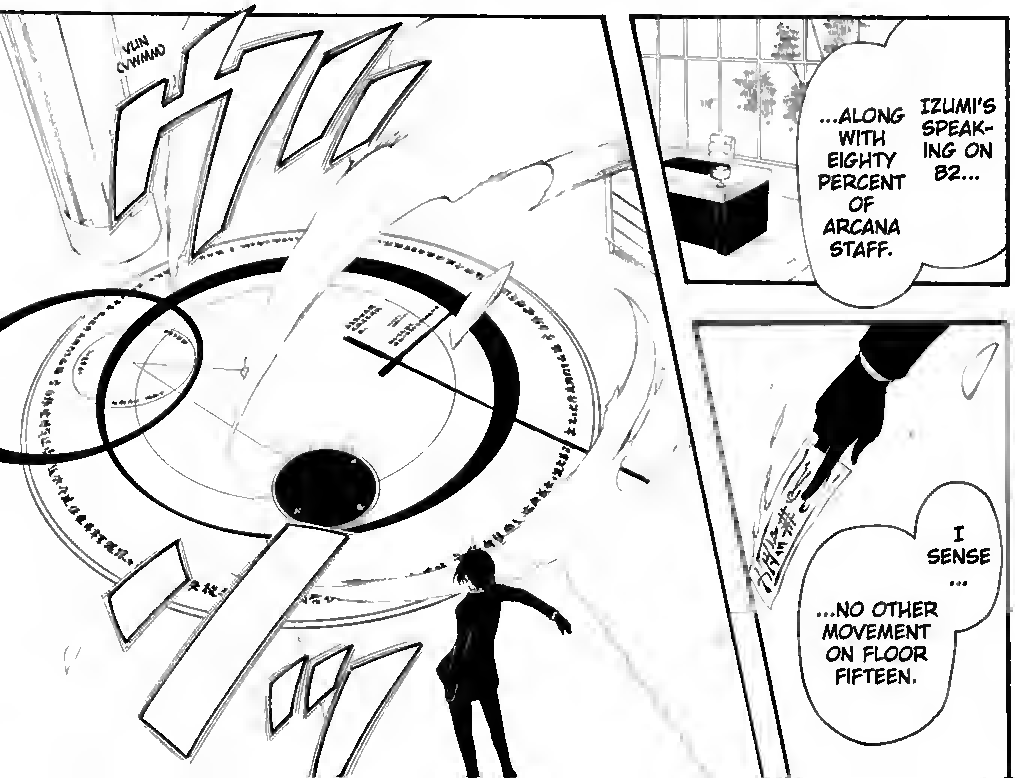
I'D ALREADY REHEARSED "DUPING THEM," "EXTRACTING MYSELF"... AND "POSSIBLE RESPONSES."
THOUGH MY CURIOSITY ALMOST SLIPPED ME UP.
C'MON, ALL OF ARCANA BECAME DEMONS!
I HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE OF TWO SETS OF CRUSADES...
...AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING A GOD CANDIDATE... SUBARU.
ALL THAT, COMBINED WITH HINATA'S ABILITY TO DEVISE A SPELL FORMULA THAT CAN MEDDLE WITH THE CORE OF THE CRUSADES.
ONCE I'VE SWIPED THE CHALICE IT'S CHECKMATE.
I CAN RID THE WORLD OF THIS SYSTEM OF THE CRUSADES.
...BUT ONCE THE CURRENT ROUND OF CRUSADES CONCLUDES ...
...I'LL LOSE MY ONLY CHANCE TO USE THIS SPELL.
EVEN IF THIS SPELL FORMULA COULD BE PRESERVED FOR ANOTHER FIFTY YEARS...
...WHO KNOWS IF SOMEONE ELSE WILL COME ALONG WHO WANTS TO DESTROY THE CRUSADES ...?
KAN カン
KAN カン
SO FOR ME...
...THIS IS DO OR DIE.

IF I CAN TAKE THE CHALICE, MY WISH FROM FIFTY YEARS AGO WILL FINALLY COME TRUE.

WHY ARE YOU USING THE FIRE STAIRS?
HALT.
THIS FLOOR IS CURRENTLY OFF-LIMITS.
HIS EXCELLENCY IS IN THE GREAT HALL ON FLOOR...
...B2...
GURA (SWAY)

GACHA
LOCAL SECURITY CAMERAS HACKED.
GUARD DEMONS DISPOSED OF.

KII (CREAK)


VUIN (WHIRR)
IZUMI'S SPEAKING ON B2...
...ALONG WITH EIGHTY PERCENT OF ARCANA STAFF.
I SENSE ...
...NO OTHER MOVEMENT ON FLOOR FIFTEEN.

UN-
COVER
IT.
GA
(KRASH)
GA
GA
GA
ZU
(KATHOOM)
GAKI
(KREEEE)
I BET
THEY DO
INTERRO-
GATIONS
HERE.
AND HAVE
HAD THE
ENTIRE
BUILDING
SOUND-
PROOFED.

...FOUND IT.
THE CHALICE'S HIDING SPOT.
(VWEE)
...YOU THINK ...?
YOU DON'T THINK HE'D KEEP SOMETHING SO PRECIOUS CLOSE BY?
TOLD YA...
...IT WAS IN HIS OFFICE.
WELL...
SORRY, BUT...
KATSU CHAO

KITSU (TIGHT)
...I'M... GONNA TEAR DOWN THIS SHIELD.
DOO (WHOOM)
-SOM-
UN-LOCK ...!!
GU (PULL)
GU
DAN (PWAFF)
DO (THUD)
OW!

THIS IS...
...THE CHALICE .....?
I CANNOT ACCEPT THAT THIS...
...IS THE SACRED RITE THAT DECIDES WHO WILL BE GOD.
OBTAIN THE CHALICE, AND WE CAN WRECK THE CRUSADES.

GYU (SQUEEZE)
LAUNCH ME TO THE ERA OF THE NEXT CRUSADES.
NOW I CAN FINALLY...BE LIBERATED...
FROM THE CRU-SADES ...
...AND FROM THE PAST TOO...
AH...
I BETTER HURRY BACK AND UNDO TSUKIMIYA'S BLACK SEAL.
SHE'S EAGER TO BE FREE AS WELL...

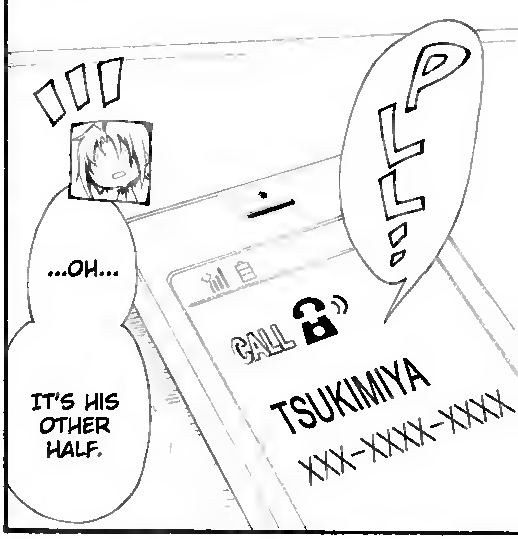
WHAT, GOING HOME ALREADY?
I HAD A VISION OF YOU COMING HERE...
...JUST PRIOR TO THE CRUSADES, HINATA.
...NH!?
(FWP)

HYU (WHISH)
NOW ...
...I THINK IT HIGH TIME I EXTERMINATE THIS STICKY-FINGERED INSECT.
PASHI (SLAP)
KOTSU (TOK)
IZUMI'S FOUND ME.
DAM-MIT...
BUT IF I CAN JUST GET OUT OF HERE WITH THE CHALICE, I'M...
BASHI (WHAM)

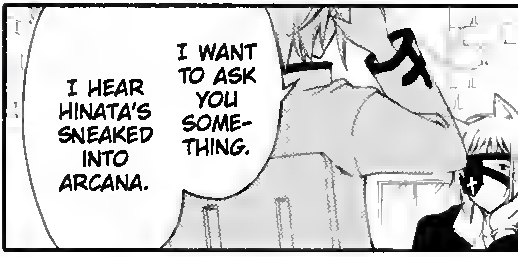
WHA...?
BA CLUNCH
I SAID I FORESAW THIS, DID I NOT?
YOU'VE BEEN CAUGHT IN A TRAP.
YOU'RE KIDDING.
DID HOLDING THE FAKE CHALICE ...
...REALLY GIVE YOU SO MUCH PLEASURE?
ALL THAT EFFORT...
...FOR A FAKE...!?

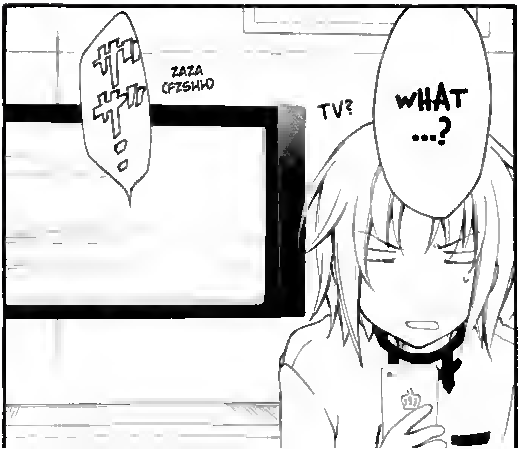
"WE HAVE RELIABLE INTELLIGENCE STATING HINATA SNEAKED INTO ARCANA...
"...BUT WAS IT ON YOUR ORDERS?"
...I SAID...
.....HUH? WHAT WAS THAT?
...WAS IT ON MY ORDERS?
I'M ASKING 'COS I HAVE NO CLUE.
...Y'KNOW, YOU'RE HARD TO TALK TO.
I DON'T KNOW EITHER.
I CERTAINLY NEVER GAVE SUCH A DIRECTIVE.
MOGU CHUNCHO MOGU
もぐ
もぐ
BUT ...
...I DIDN'T REALLY GIVE HIM ANY RESTRICTIONS EITHER, SO...
PLI...

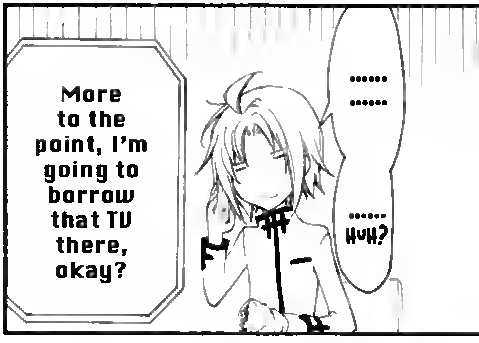
My... That hardly seems relevant in this situation.
YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT IT?


!!!
...OH...
IT'S HIS OTHER HALF.
CALL
TSUKIMIYA
XXX-XXXX-XXXX

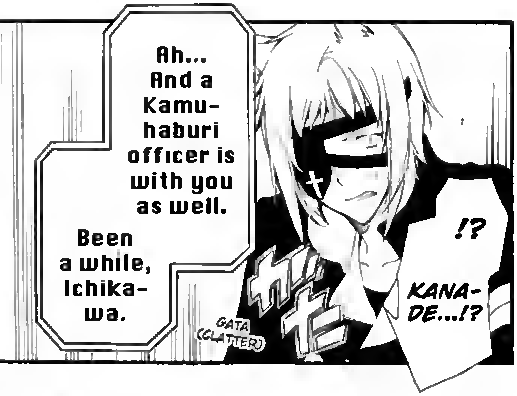
YOU HAVE INCREDIBLE TIMING WHEN IT COMES TO PHONE CALLS.
DI (BEEP)
YES, YES, IT'S ME.


I HEAR HINATA'S SNEAKED INTO ARCANA.
I WANT TO ASK YOU SOME-THING.

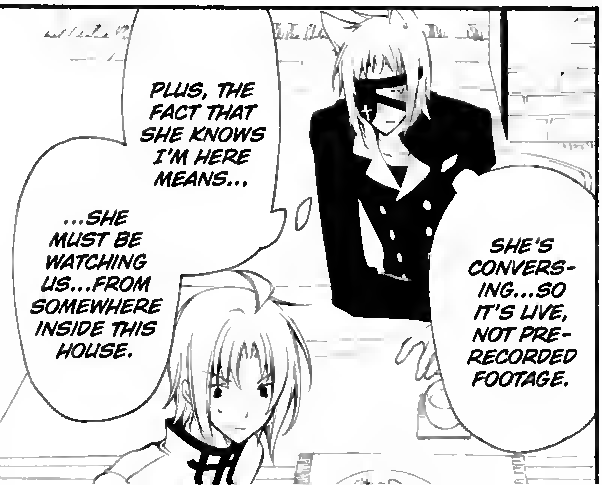

ZAZA (FZSHH)
TV?
WHAT ...?

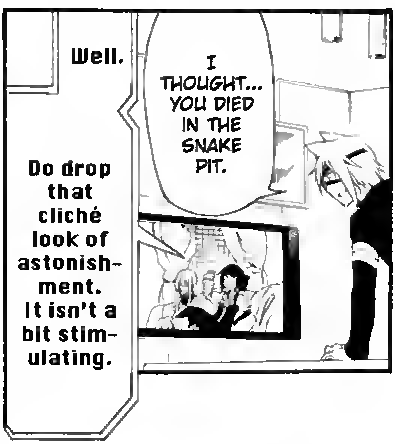

More to the point, I'm going to borrow that TV there, okay?
.....
.....
.....
HUH?

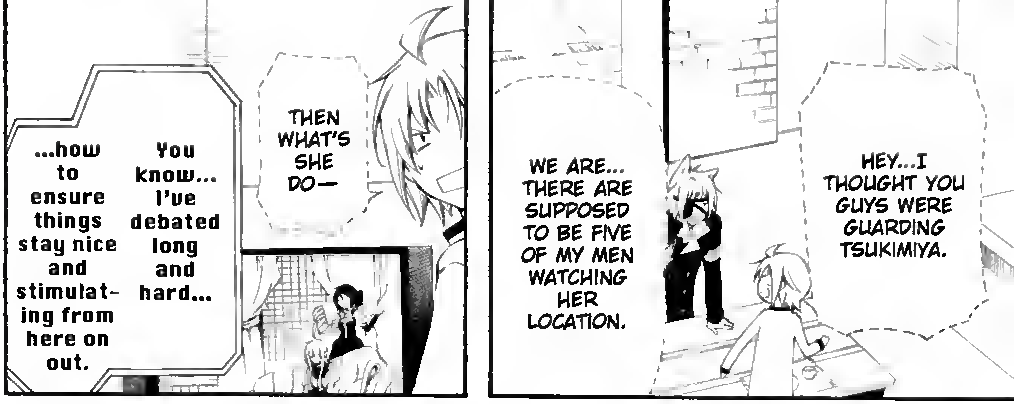
PA
FLASH

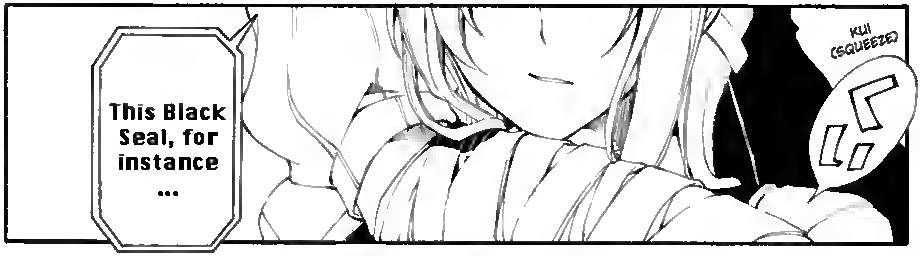

Ah... And a Kamu-haburi officer is with you as well.
Been a while, Ichika-wa.
!?
KANA-DE...!?
GATA (CLATTER)

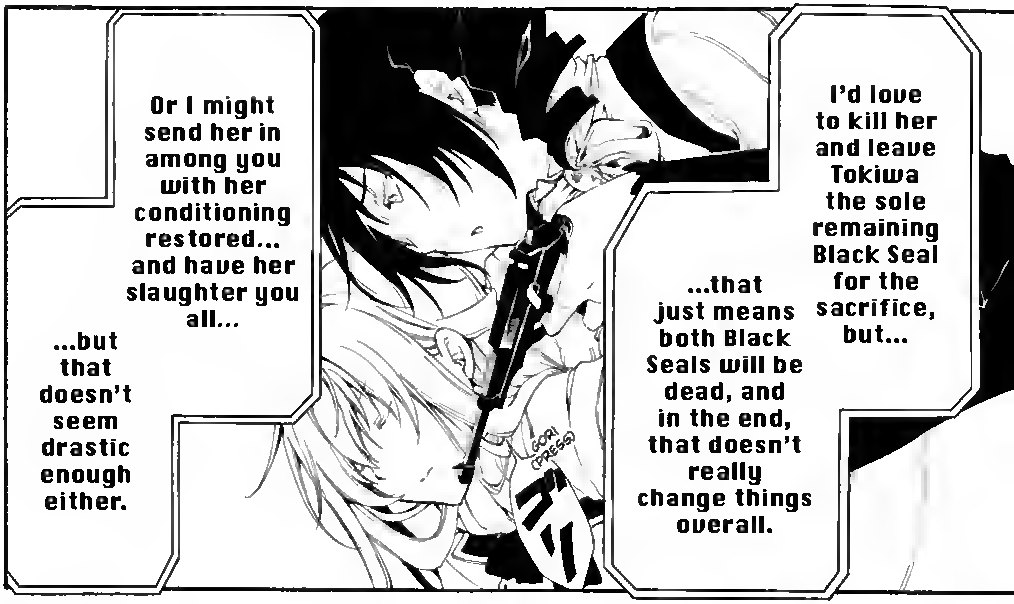
Hello...
...my little Lord God candidate. Remember me? The one you and Kamu-haburi set up?


PLUS, THE FACT THAT SHE KNOWS I'M HERE MEANS...
...SHE MUST BE WATCHING US...FROM SOMEWHERE INSIDE THIS HOUSE.
SHE'S CONVERS-ING...SO IT'S LIVE, NOT PRE-RECORDED FOOTAGE.


Well.
Do drop that cliché look of astonish-ment. It isn't a bit stim-ulating.
I THOUGHT... YOU DIED IN THE SNAKE PIT.

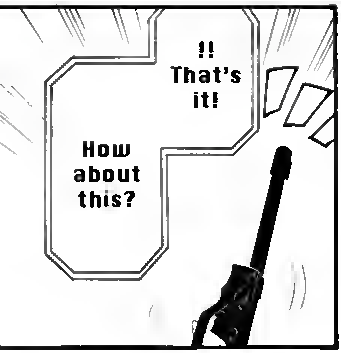

HEY...I THOUGHT YOU GUYS WERE GUARDING TSUKIMIYA.
WE ARE... THERE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE FIVE OF MY MEN WATCHING HER LOCATION.
THEN WHAT'S SHE DO—
You know... I've debated long and hard...
...how to ensure things stay nice and stimulating from here on out.


This Black Seal, for instance ...
KUI (SQUEEZE)

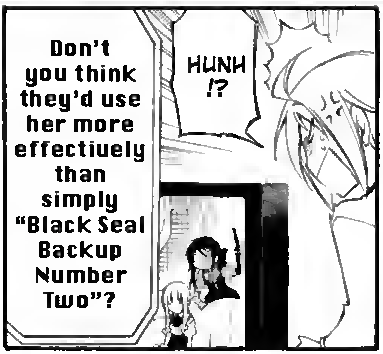

I'd love to kill her and leave Tokiwa the sole remaining Black Seal for the sacrifice, but...
...that just means both Black Seals will be dead, and in the end, that doesn't really change things overall.
Or I might send her in among you with her conditioning restored... and have her slaughter you all...
...but that doesn't seem drastic enough either.
KUI (PRESS)

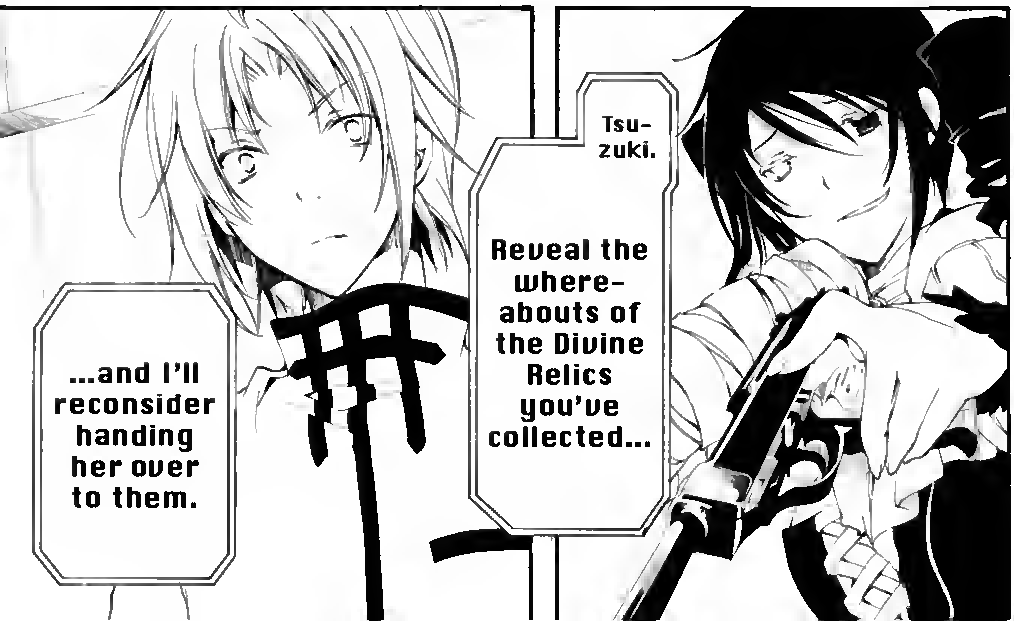
And then...
...it came to me.

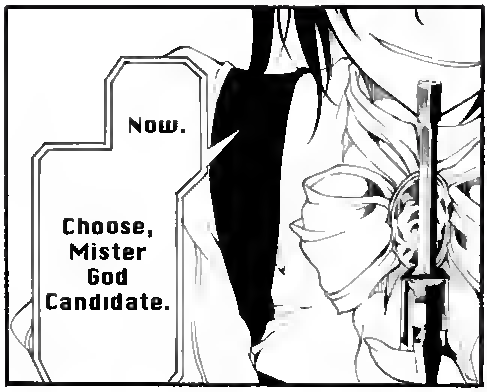
With you...
...she's just a boring pawn.
So why not just offer her up to either Satsuki or Rrcana as a gift?

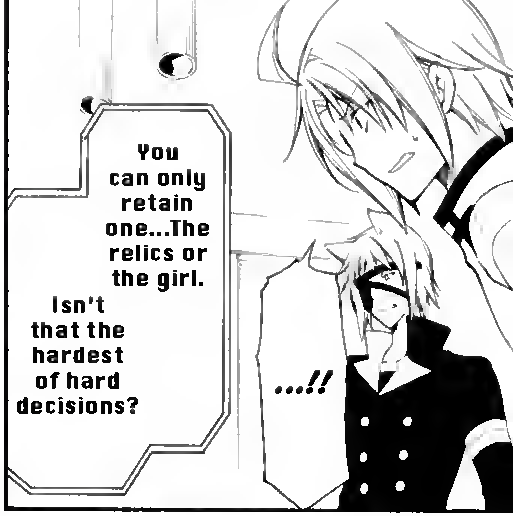

!! That's it!
How about this?

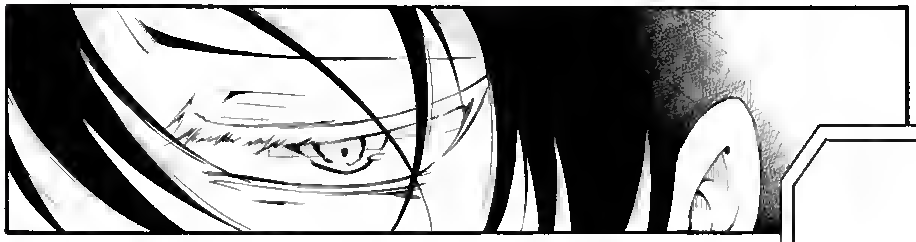
But that alone may not be enough.
... Hmm ...
... Ahh ...
OH!

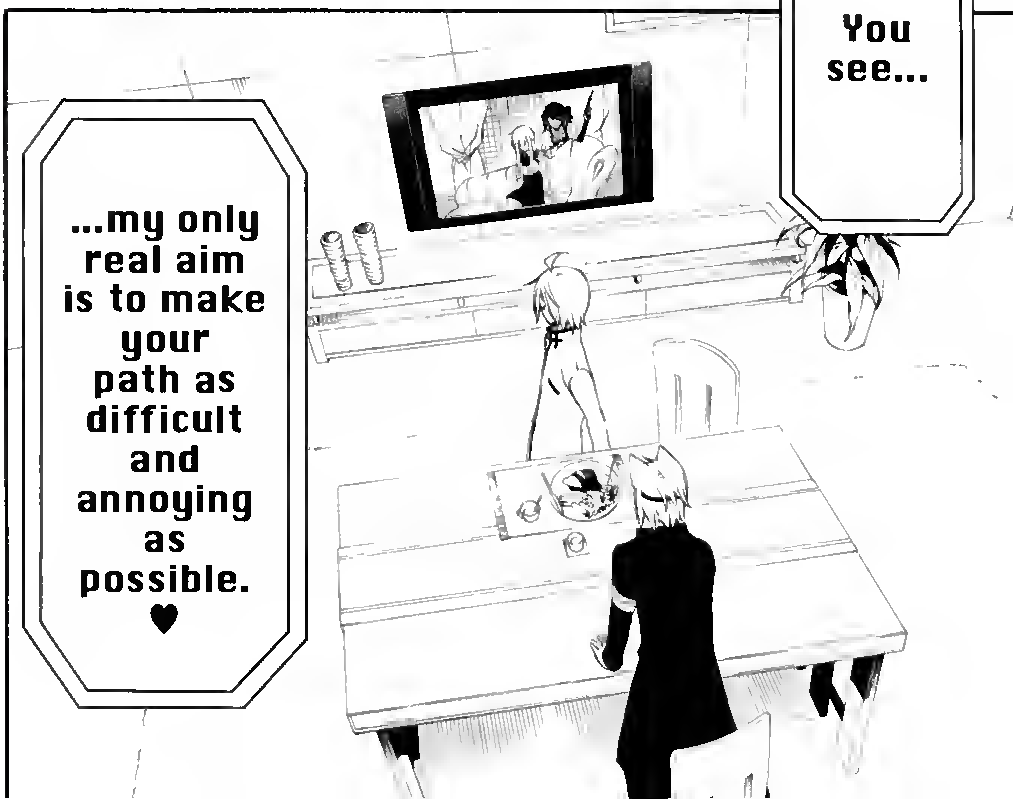

Don't you think they'd use her more effectiuely than simply "Black Seal Backup Number Two"?
HUNH !?


...and I'll reconsider handing her over to them.
Tsu-zuki.
Reveal the where-abouts of the Divine Relics you've collected...


Now.
Choose, Mister God Candidate.


You can only retain one...The relics or the girl.
Isn't that the hardest of hard decisions?
...!!




You see...
...my only real aim is to make your path as difficult and annoying as possible.
♥

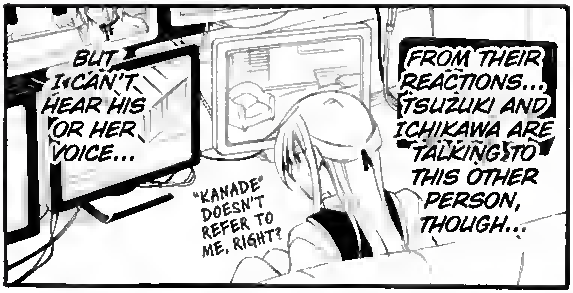
BLOODY CROSS

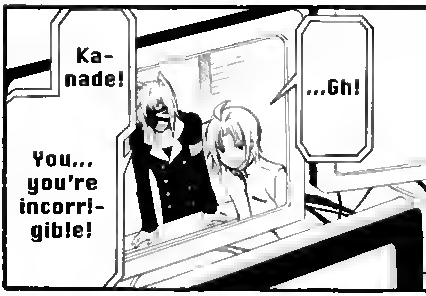
BLOODY CROSS

WHAT THE HECK IS GOING ON?
...WHAT...
Chapter 61
Choices
I WOKE UP...
...IN THIS STRANGE ROOM FULL OF MONITORS.
AN EMPTY SPOT ON THE SOFA...IS GROANING.
GISHI (CREAK)
MY.
YOUR TROUBLED FACES ARE TOO YUMMY.
I FEEL AIR-MOVEMENT BY MY EAR...
NOW... WHICH ONE SHALL YOU RELINQUISH, HMM?

IT DOESN'T MATTER TO ME WHICH ONE YOU CHOOSE.
WHICH MEANS...
...THERE'S ANOTHER PERSON IN THIS ROOM.

BLACK SEAL NUMBER TWO?
OR THE RELICS YOU'VE GATHERED SO FAR?
SOMEONE MUST BE SPEAKING.


BUT I CAN'T HEAR HIS OR HER VOICE...
"KANADE" DOESN'T REFER TO ME, RIGHT?
FROM THEIR REACTIONS... TSUZUKI AND ICHIKAWA ARE TALKING TO THIS OTHER PERSON, THOUGH...


Ka-nade!
You... you're incorri-gible!
...Gh!

...I'LL GIVE YOU THREE MIN-UTES.
I DOUBT YOU CAN MANAGE AN INSTANT REPLY, SO...
WELL... YOU ALWAYS WERE A BIT OF A COWARD.
WHICH MEANS... AN ENEMY? RIGHT?
EVEN SO, JUDGING BY THEIR END OF THE CONVER-SATION, IT SEEMS THEY'RE BEING THREAT-ENED.

YOU KNOW, IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME TILL I CATCH YOUUU.
KOTSU
KOTSU (TOK)
MISS MARIANNE, PLEASE POUR SOME TEA.
... HUH ...?
HUH? SHE'S GONE.
HAVE YOU RUN AWAY?
KATSU (TAK)
NOW, NOW, MISS MARIANNE.
FOOTSTEPS...
KARI (SLIT)
KOTSU
MISS MARI-ANNE...

BYU (SLASH)

!!

TCH ...!

OH MY...

Hey!
You're conscious!?
QUIET. I'M TRYING TO CONCENTRATE!
I DIDN'T EVEN GRAZE THEM!
EVEN THOUGH THE SOUNDS CAME FROM THERE.

DON (BLAM)
...BUT...
JA (CHAK)
DON
DON
TON (TMP)
YOU SHOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SEE ME, BUT THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL.
CLEVER GIRL.

LUU (SHHH)
YOU HAVE NO WAY OF EVADING BULLETS...
...FIRED BY AN INVISIBLE OPPONENT. HM?

SHUUU (FSHHH)
...YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T MAKE A MOVE UNTIL AFTER...
...YOU'VE ASCERTAINED WHAT YOUR FOE'S WEAPON IS.
...KH!

TSUKIMIYA'S CONDITIONING...
...SHOULD HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY UNDONE BASED ON THE DATA LEFT IN RIDO'S LAB.
...BUT...
...COULD IT STILL BE IN PLACE?
HEY, YOU!
DON'T KILL THE HOSTAGE IN THE MIDDLE OF NEGOTIATIONS!
SHE'S UNABLE TO SEE KANADE ...!?
IT MAKES FOR A FINE DIVERSION...
...BUT YOUR SCURRYING IS INTERFERING WITH MY PARLEY.
KA-SU
KATSU (TAO)
HUH ...?
GAKU (SLUMP)
IN (GSN)
MM...

GU (GRAB)
HOW ABOUT ...
...YOU GO BACK TO SLEEP.
OOH, WHAT A LOVELY EXPRES-SION!
...!?
PERHAPS I'LL ENTERTAIN MYSELF...
...BY MAKING YOU GRIMACE MORE, UNTIL THE GOD CANDIDATE MAKES HIS CHOICE. ♥

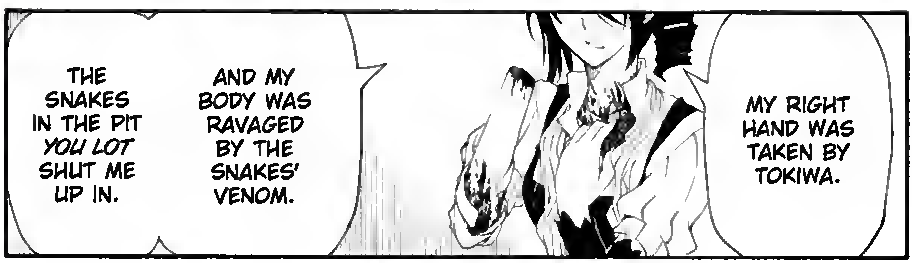
...HASN'T CHANGED.
...YOUR POOR TASTE...
SO, YOU'RE STILL ALIVE...
CHAK! (KSHING?)
...KA-NADE.
SETSU NOTICED YOU ABDUCTING THE BLACK SEAL.
HE TAILED YOU, THEN REPORTED IN TO ME.
DON'T DISCOUNT KAMU-HABURI.
CURI-OUS...
THIS LOCATION SHOULDN'T BE KNOWN TO ANYONE.
MY, KIKU-SAKA.

A snake?
...I BELIEVE THERE IS A SNAKE SPYING ON YOUR HOUSE.
AND, LORD GOD CANDIDATE...
Those assigned to guard her...
...have apparently been killed...
...!
THESE MONITORS ARE DISPLAYING IMAGES BEING CAPTURED BY SNAKE EYES.
GOSO (SHIFF)
BECAUSE WE DIDN'T DETECT ANY SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS OR SPELLS...
...WE WERE CARELESS.
BOTO (PLOP)
BUT I FOUND THIS WHERE TSUKIMIYA WAS.
THE WORD "PEEP" IS WRITTEN ON THE SNAKE'S EYES.
CONTROL COMMANDS THAT MANIFEST AS WORDS ON ONE'S EYES...
ISN'T THAT YOUR SPECIALITY, KANADE?
...HEH.

GOT-CHA!
JAKI (X-CLICK)
UNH ...!!
ZA (CLASH)
BOTO (PLOP)
DON
DON
DON
DON (BLAM)
...KA-NADE ...

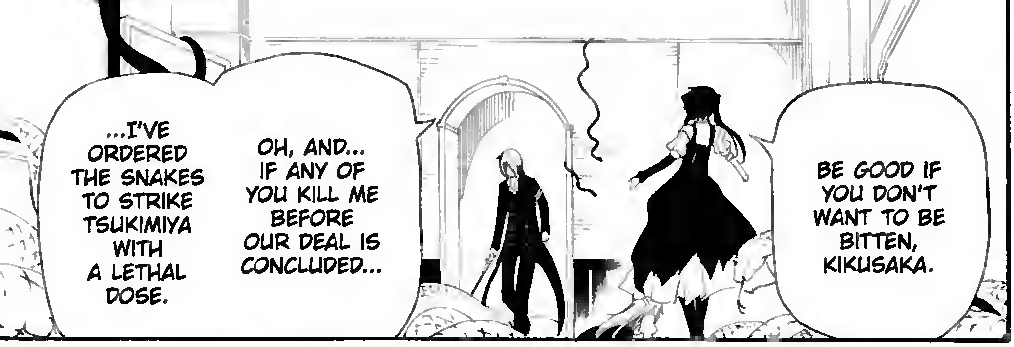
GA (OSHU)
...YOUR RIGHT HAND...
TOKIWA-SAN CUT IT CLEAN OFF, HUH...
...OH, HOW BORING.
GU (CLUTCH)
THAT'S YOUR ONLY REACTION?

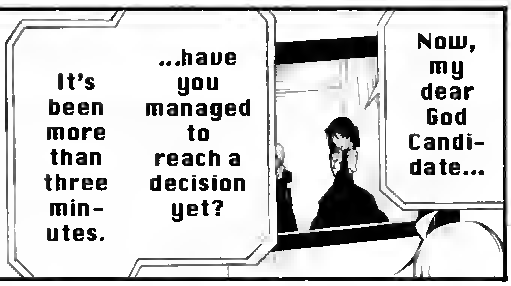
GO ON, TAKE A CLOSER LOOK.
SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT ALL OF YOU HAVE DONE TO ME.
!!
...!
GFSHUD

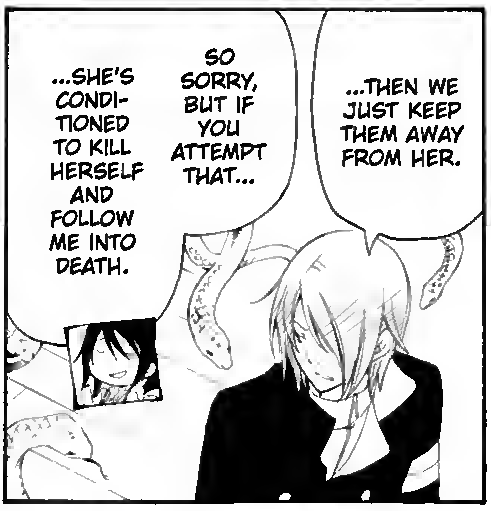

MY RIGHT HAND WAS TAKEN BY TOKIWA.
AND MY BODY WAS RAVAGED BY THE SNAKES' VENOM.
THE SNAKES IN THE PIT *YOU LOT* SHUT ME UP IN.

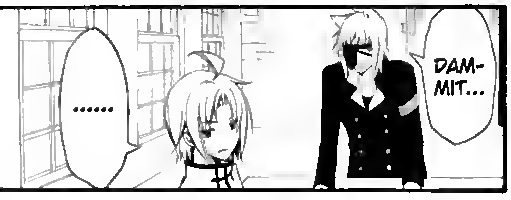
ICHI-KAWA.
YOU ASKED ME HOW I MANAGED TO GET OUT OF THE SNAKE PIT.
ALLOW ME TO EXPLAIN.
WITHIN THAT HELL, MY WHOLE BODY...
...WAS STEEPED IN VENOM...
I WAS MEANT TO PERISH, BEARING ONLY MY HATRED TOWARD YOU TO THE GRAVE.
BUT FATE DECIDED TO GRANT ME ONE MORE CHANCE.
AS I WAS JOSTLED BY THE SNAKES...
...THE SEAL OVER MY EYES FORTU-ITOUSLY CAME UNDONE.
LABEL: SEAL
I THEN USED THESE "EYES" TO BRING THE SNAKES UNDER MY CONTROL...
YOU CAN IMAGINE THE REST, NO?
GUGH (GRIT)
HOW-EVER ...
...I JUST TRADED ONE HELL FOR ANOTHER.
SHARP PAIN SHOOTS THROUGH MY BODY WITH EVERY MOVE-MENT.
THIS INFAMOUS VENOM THAT HAS DEVOURED COUNTLESS OFFENDERS IN KAMU-HABURI'S EXECUTION GROUNDS ...
IT IS... QUITE THE TOXIN... ONE THAT EATS AWAY ONE'S BODY AND PSYCHE UNTIL ONE DESPAIRS AND GOES MAD.

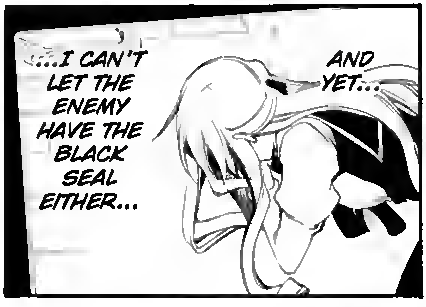
BY THE WAY...
...THOSE VERY SNAKES ARE CURRENTLY PEEPING ON YOU.

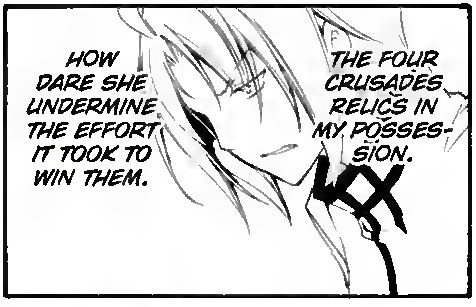

BE GOOD IF YOU DON'T WANT TO BE BITTEN, KIKUSAKA.
OH, AND... IF ANY OF YOU KILL ME BEFORE OUR DEAL IS CONCLUDED...
...I'VE ORDERED THE SNAKES TO STRIKE TSUKIMIYA WITH A LETHAL DOSE.

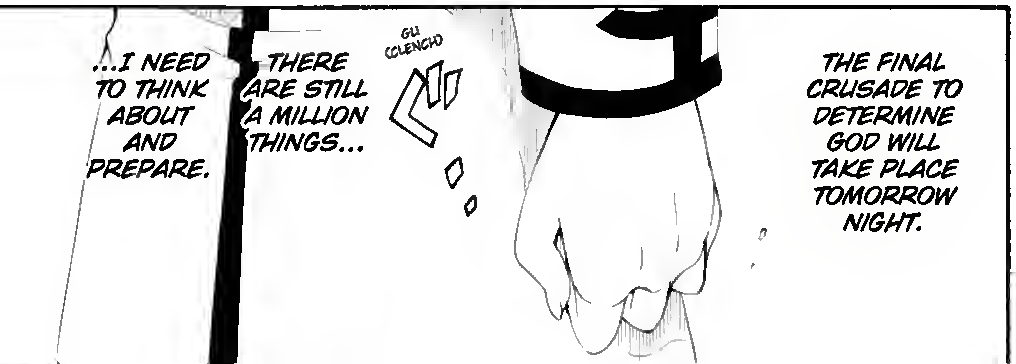

Now, my dear God Candidate...
...have you managed to reach a decision yet?
It's been more than three minutes.


...THEN WE JUST KEEP THEM AWAY FROM HER.
SO SORRY, BUT IF YOU ATTEMPT THAT...
...SHE'S CONDITIONED TO KILL HERSELF AND FOLLOW ME INTO DEATH.

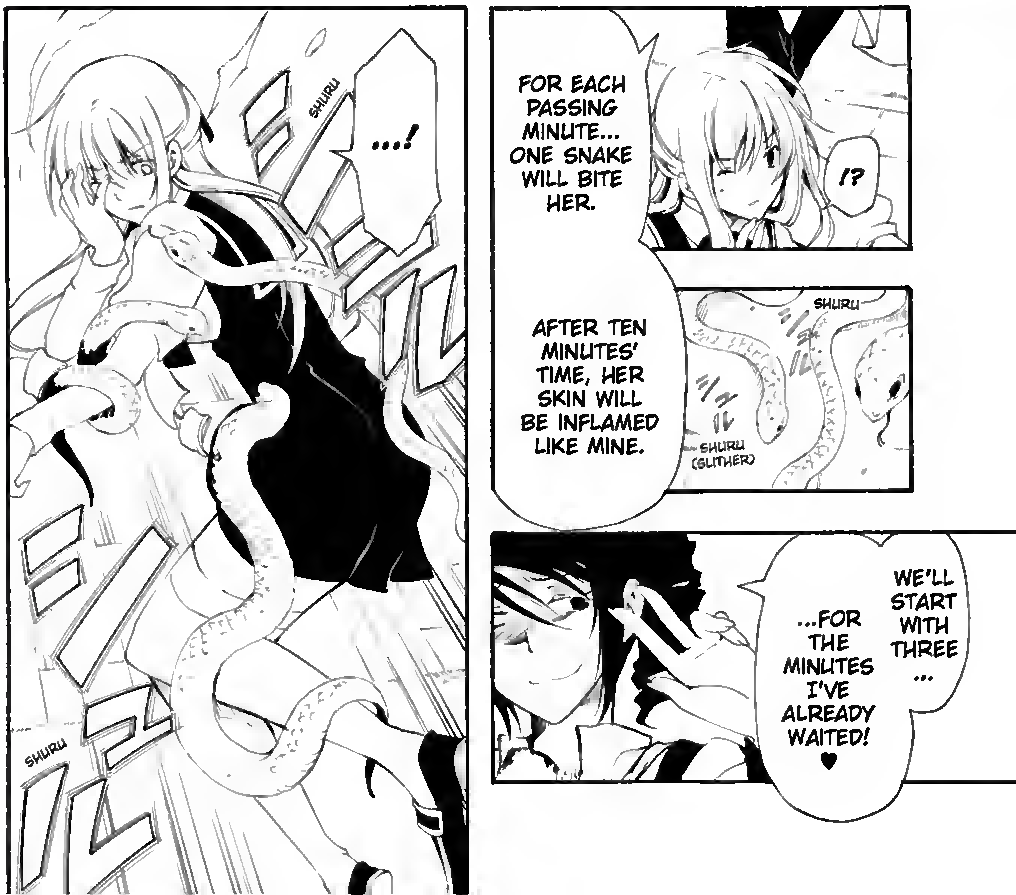

DAMMIT...
.....


AND YET...
...I CAN'T LET THE ENEMY HAVE THE BLACK SEAL EITHER...


THE FOUR CRUSADES RELICS IN MY POSSESSION.
HOW DARE SHE UNDERMINE THE EFFORT IT TOOK TO WIN THEM.

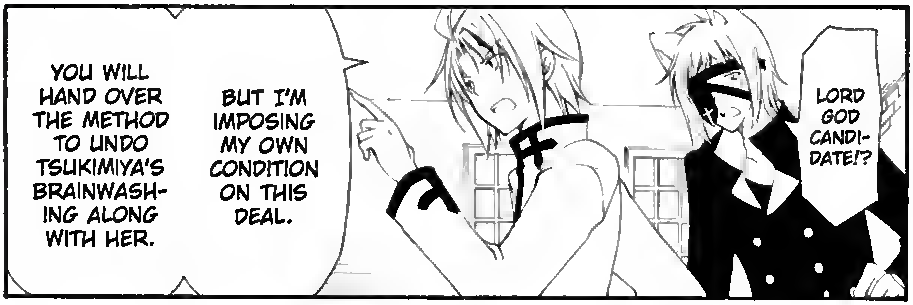

THE FINAL CRUSADE TO DETERMINE GOD WILL TAKE PLACE TOMORROW NIGHT.
GU CCLENCH
THERE ARE STILL A MILLION THINGS...
...I NEED TO THINK ABOUT AND PREPARE.

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO BE DEALING WITH HER...!
HAVE YOU NOT CHOSEN YET? SO INDECISIVE ...
WELL, THEN... I'LL HAVE TO PENALIZE YOU.
UNTIL YOU MAKE YOUR CHOICE, THIS BLACK SEAL...
GURI (GRIND)
...SHALL SUFFER AS I DID...
...THE PUNISH-MENT OF THIS VENOM.


...!
SHURU
SHURU
FOR EACH PASSING MINUTE... ONE SNAKE WILL BITE HER.
!?
AFTER TEN MINUTES' TIME, HER SKIN WILL BE INFLAMED LIKE MINE.
SHURU
SHURU (SLITHER)
WE'LL START WITH THREE ...
...FOR THE MINUTES I'VE ALREADY WAITED! ♥

HEH HEH!
POOR CHILD.
I'M SURE SHE'D HAVE PREFERRED ...
...TO STAY PRETTY ...
GUPA (GAPE)
...UNTIL HER INEVITABLE DEATH AT THE END OF THE CRUSADES.
...HEY.
That's enough fooling around...
... scum.
...EXCUSE ME?
...HOW DARE YOU TRY TO STIR UP TROUBLE AT SUCH A CRUCIAL TIME?
YOU... ...ARE SO SICK IN THE HEAD... IT'S TRULY REVOLTING.

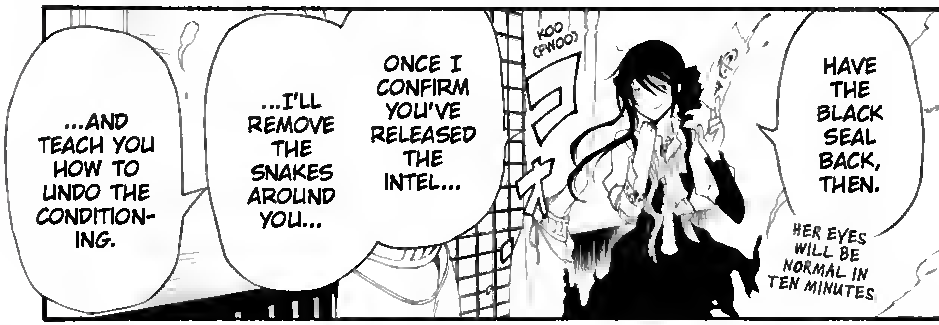
...I'LL PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOUR CRUSADES RELICS IN MY POSSESSION...
...PUBLICLY TO MY ENEMIES.


LORD GOD CANDIDATE!?
BUT I'M IMPOSING MY OWN CONDITION ON THIS DEAL.
YOU WILL HAND OVER THE METHOD TO UNDO TSUKIMIYA'S BRAINWASHING ALONG WITH HER.

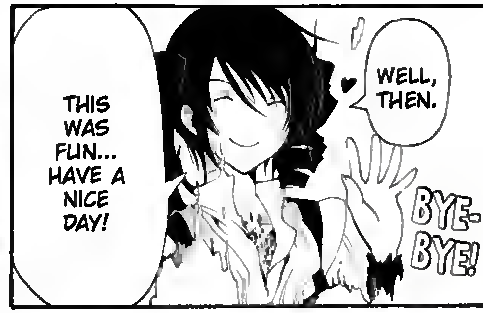
...GOOD ANSWER. ♥

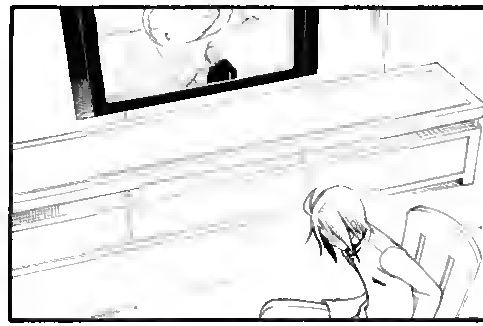
WELL, HOW'S THAT, LOW-LIFE?

DON (SHOVE)

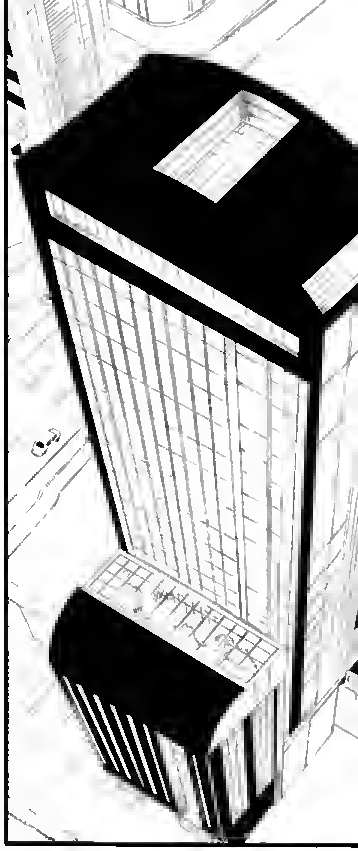

KOO (PHOO)
HAVE THE BLACK SEAL BACK, THEN.
HER EYES WILL BE NORMAL IN TEN MINUTES
ONCE I CONFIRM YOU'VE RELEASED THE INTEL...
...I'LL REMOVE THE SNAKES AROUND YOU...
...AND TEACH YOU HOW TO UNDO THE CONDITION-ING.

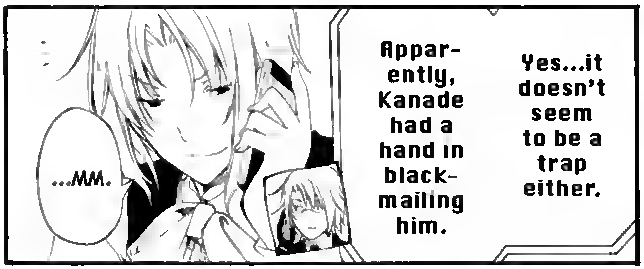
...DAM-MIT!
GIRI (GRIT)

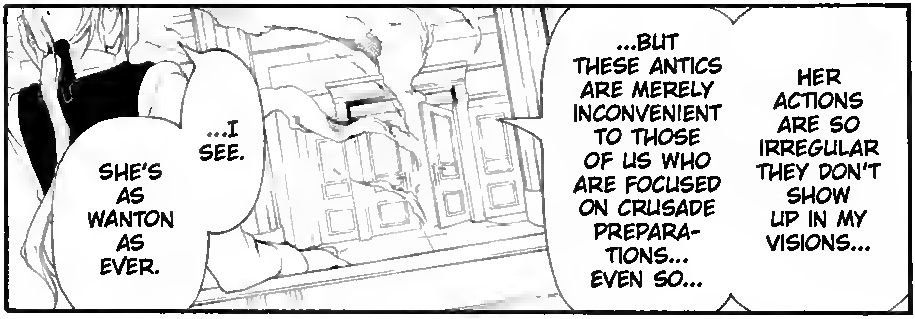

WELL, THEN.
THIS WAS FUN... HAVE A NICE DAY!
BYE-BYE!

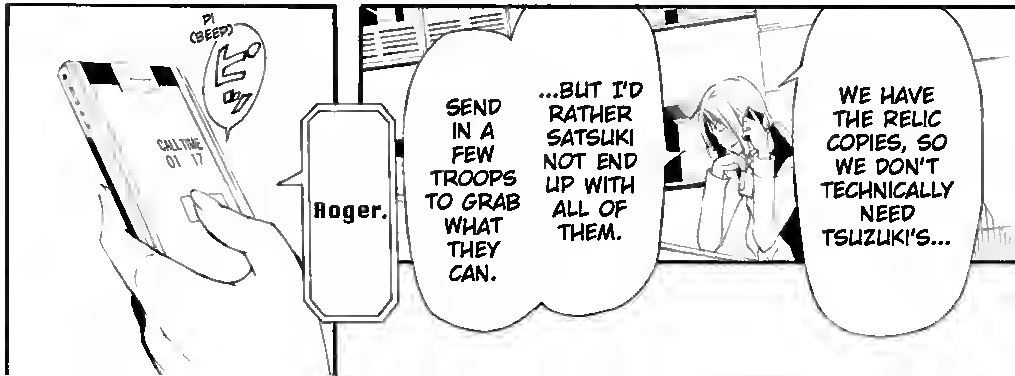


TSUZUKI REVEALED WHERE HE'S STORED HIS RELICS?

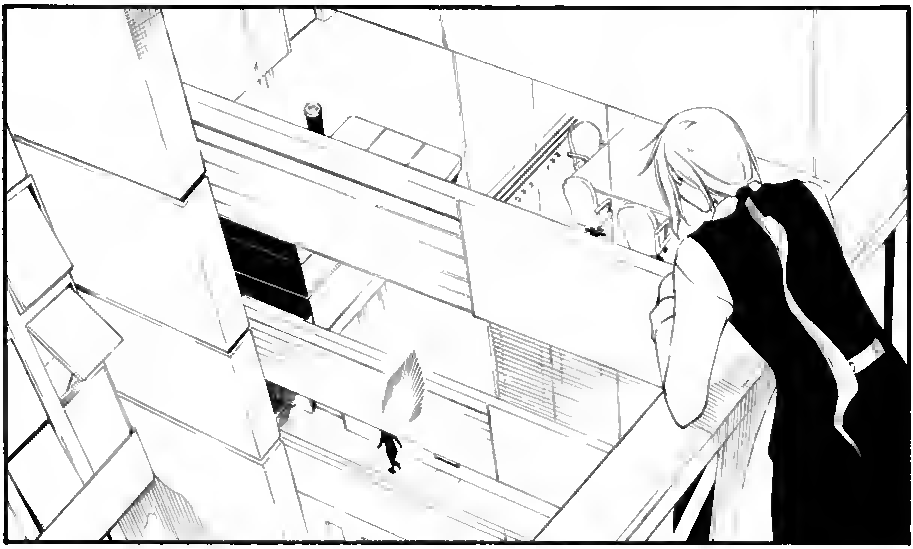


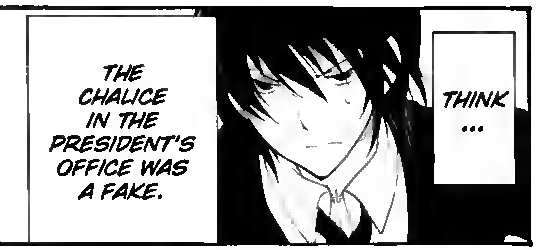

...MM.
Apparently, Kanade had a hand in blackmailing him.
Yes...it doesn't seem to be a trap either.


...I SEE.
SHE'S AS WANTON AS EVER.
...BUT THESE ANTICS ARE MERELY INCONVENIENT TO THOSE OF US WHO ARE FOCUSED ON CRUSADE PREPARATIONS... EVEN SO...
HER ACTIONS ARE SO IRREGULAR THEY DON'T SHOW UP IN MY VISIONS...

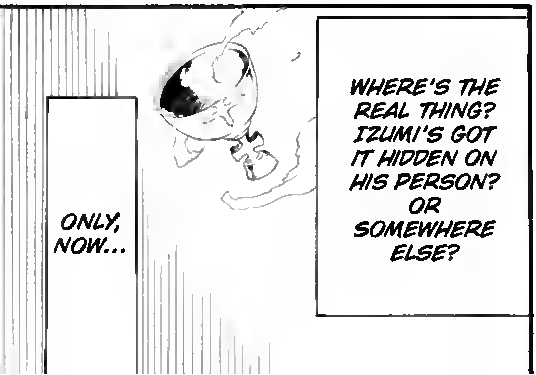

PI (BEEP)
CALLING 01 17
Roger.
SEND IN A FEW TROOPS TO GRAB WHAT THEY CAN.
...BUT I'D RATHER SATSUKI NOT END UP WITH ALL OF THEM.
WE HAVE THE RELIC COPIES, SO WE DON'T TECHNICALLY NEED TSUZUKI'S...

...NOW THEN...




THE CHALICE IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE WAS A FAKE.
THINK...

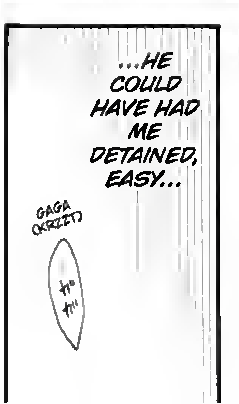
...HFF.
HFF.


WHERE'S THE REAL THING? IZUMI'S GOT IT HIDDEN ON HIS PERSON? OR SOMEWHERE ELSE?
ONLY, NOW...

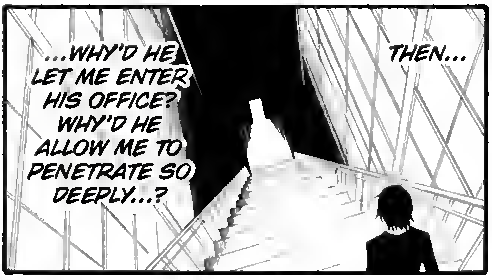
NOW THAT I'VE BEEN FOUND OUT...
...DO I STILL TRY TO FIND IT, OR SHOULD I FLEE AND BIDE MY TIME...
...AND WAIT FOR A SECOND OPPORTUNITY?

—HE FORESAW... MY COMING HERE?

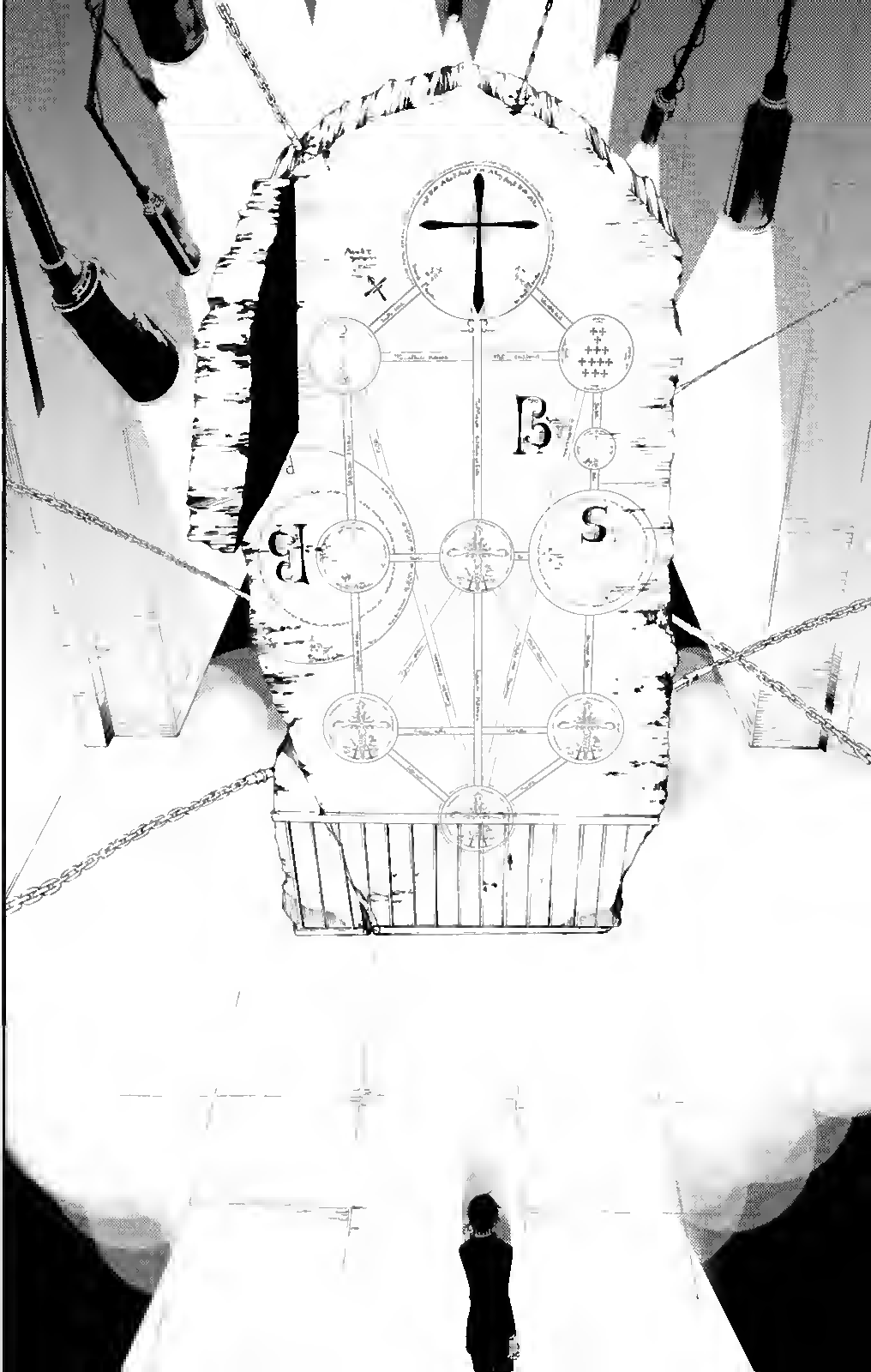
...NO, THERE MAY NOT BE ANOTHER CHANCE.
IF I PLAN ANOTHER SURPRISE ATTACK FOR THE CHALICE...
...IF IZUMI FORESEES IT AGAIN, I'LL LOSE THE ADVANTAGE OF CATCHING HIM OFF GUARD.
KAN
FOUND A STAIRCASE THE ENEMY HADN'T BEAT ME TO!
KAN (STEP)
KAN
KAN


...HE COULD HAVE HAD ME DETAINED, EASY...
GAGA (KRRIT)

THE MOMENT I SNUCK INTO ARCANA...


...WHY'D HE LET ME ENTER HIS OFFICE? WHY'D HE ALLOW ME TO PENETRATE SO DEEPLY...?
THEN...

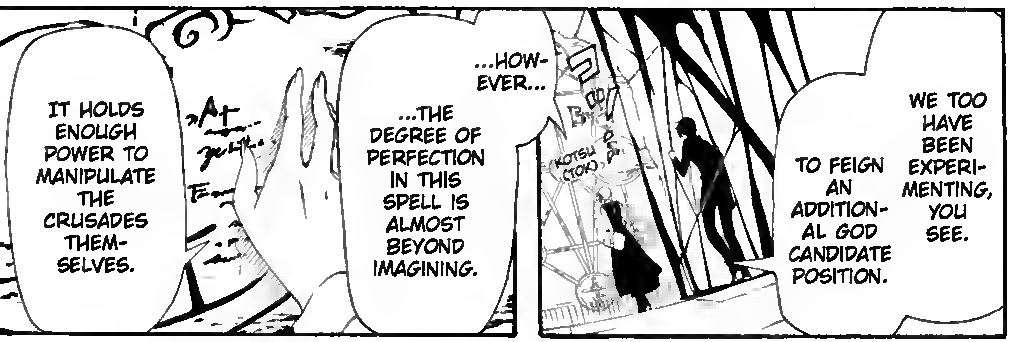
...an...
swer...
...hear
me...?
!!
GACHA
...ta...
...
nata.
!
Oh!
Finally!
TSUKIMIYA!?
OUR CON-
NECTION'S
BEEN
FIXED!?
THE
TRANS-
MITTER
...!!
...LONG
STORY.
I'LL TELL
YOU
LATER.
Trou-
ble?
I'M JUST
ABOUT
BACK
TO YOUR
PLACE
NOW.
SORRY,
THERE
WAS SOME
TROUBLE,
AND I WAS
TAKEN
OUTSIDE...
...I'll try
my best
to keep
him away
from the
stuff you
don't
want
seen...
KAN
...INSISTED
ON SENDING
ONE PERSON
ALONG WITH
ME FOR
PROTECTION,
SO...
KOSO
KOSO
(WHISPER)
FYI,
KAMU-
HABURI
...

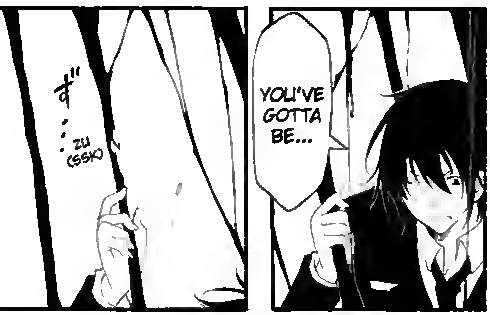


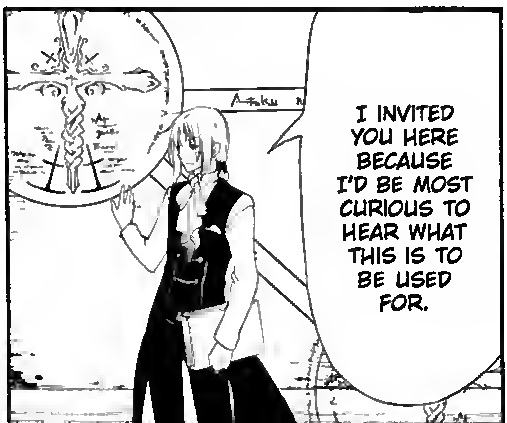
...WHA...!?
WHAT...IS A SPELL DIAGRAM JUST LIKE MINE DOING HERE...?
DOWN TO THE IMPER-FECTIONS IN THE WALL
Hey...
THIS...
...IS SOME SORT OF JOKE, RIGHT...?
YOUR HOUSE...
GOOOOO PHOOOOOO
IT'S ON FIRE.

IT'S A SPLENDID SPELL DIAGRAM.
...I TAKE IT YOU'RE THE ONE WHO CRAFTED IT...
IT APPEARS TO BE A FORMULA TO ALTER THE CORE OF THE CRUSADES... BUT...
...HI-NATA?
SHOOT, HE CAUGHT UP TO ME!
...!!
BA (WHIP)
SIMILAR TO KABBALAH'S TREE OF LIFE... BUT A BIT DIFFERENT.
...OH...
PACHIN (SNAP)

WHY DO YOU THINK I LURED YOU INTO THE DEEPEST PART OF ARCANA, FROM WHENCE THERE IS NO ESCAPE?
(GASHA (RATTLE)
YOU SHAN'T BE ALLOWED TO WALK FREE.
!?
DORU (BLOOD)


IT HOLDS ENOUGH POWER TO MANIPULATE THE CRUSADES THEM-SELVES.
...THE DEGREE OF PERFECTION IN THIS SPELL IS ALMOST BEYOND IMAGINING.
...HOW-EVER...
TO FEIGN AN ADDITION-AL GOD CANDIDATE POSITION.
WE TOO HAVE BEEN EXPERI-MENTING, YOU SEE.
(KOTSU (TOK)


ZU (GSK)
YOU'VE GOTTA BE...


I INVITED YOU HERE BECAUSE I'D BE MOST CURIOUS TO HEAR WHAT THIS IS TO BE USED FOR.

DOSA (THUD)
BY THE BY, THIS SPELL DIAGRAM... CONTAINS ADVANCED SPELL FORMULAS THAT ARE KNOWN ONLY TO GOD CANDIDATES ...
HOW IS THAT POSSIBLE, I WONDER?

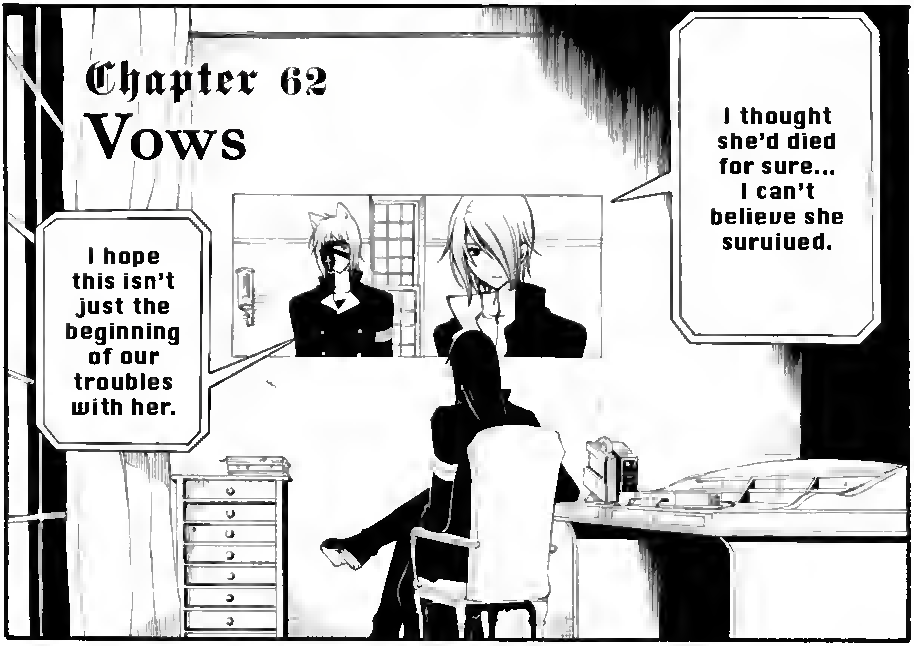
BASA (FLAP)
...IT'S HELPED ME ARRIVE AT YOUR TRUE IDENTITY.

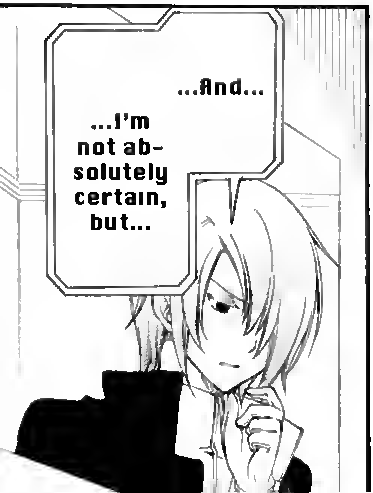
GOD CANDIDATE OF FIFTY YEARS AGO...
...SUBARU.

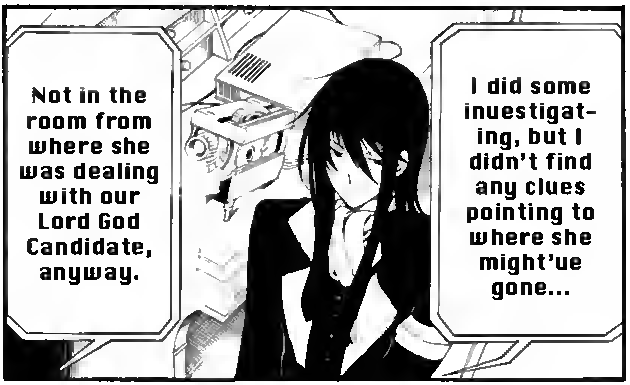
BLOODY CROSS

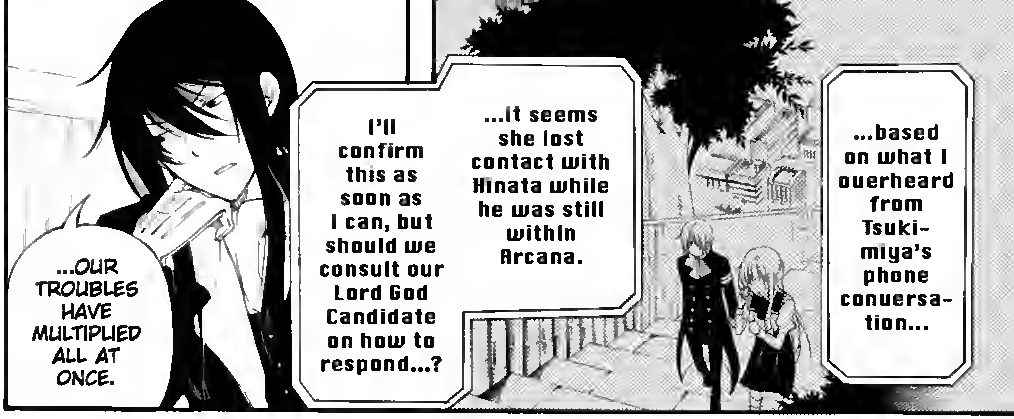
BLOODY CROSS

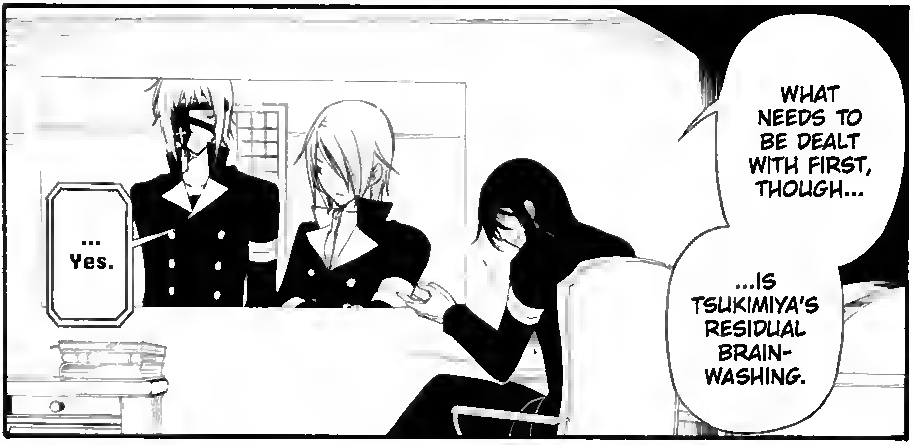
I couldn't foil Kanade's scheme or catch her.
Please forgiue me.


Chapter 62
Vows
I thought she'd died for sure... I can't believe she suruiued.
I hope this isn't just the beginning of our troubles with her.


...And...
...I'm not absolutely certain, but...

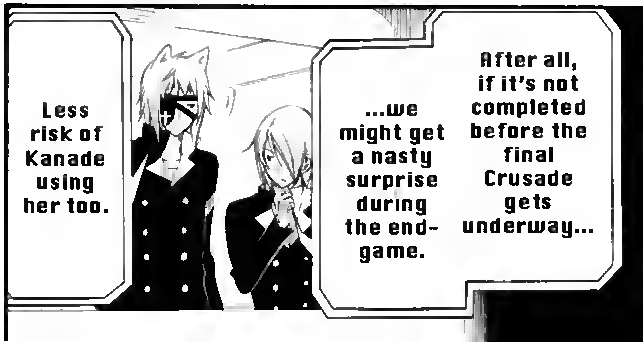

Not in the room from where she was dealing with our Lord God Candidate, anyway.
I did some inuestigating, but I didn't find any clues pointing to where she might'ue gone...


...based on what I overheard from Tsukimiya's phone conversation...
...it seems she lost contact with Hinata while he was still within Arcana.
I'll confirm this as soon as I can, but should we consult our Lord God Candidate on how to respond...?
...OUR TROUBLES HAVE MULTIPLIED ALL AT ONCE.

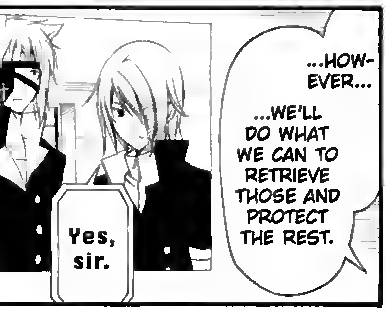

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DEALT WITH FIRST, THOUGH...
...IS TSUKIMIYA'S RESIDUAL BRAIN-WASHING.
... Yes.

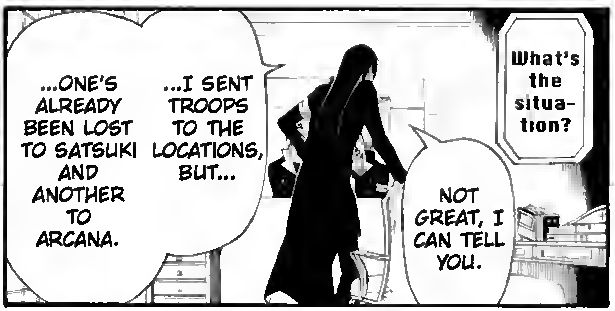
AHH... YOU TWO HAVE BEEN HANDLING THIS SITUATION ADMIRABLY ON YOUR OWN.
I GUESS I DIDN'T NEED TO HAVE YOU REPORT IN.
Huh? Please don't praise us all of a sudden.
IT'S OUT OF CHARACTER

As far as that goes, I've already handed her over to our Lord God Candidate...
...who gave every indication he'd finish undoing her conditioning by the end of today.


After all, if it's not completed before the final Crusade gets underway...
...we might get a nasty surprise during the end-game.
Less risk of Kanade using her too.

...SO ...
...KAMU-HABURI'S NUMBER ONE PROBLEM...
...IS THE FOUR DIVINE RELICS WHOSE WHEREABOUTS TSUZUKI WAS FORCED TO DISCLOSE...
...IN EXCHANGE FOR THE METHOD OF UNDOING THE BRAIN-WASHING...


...HOW-EVER...
...WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN TO RETRIEVE THOSE AND PROTECT THE REST.
Yes, sir.

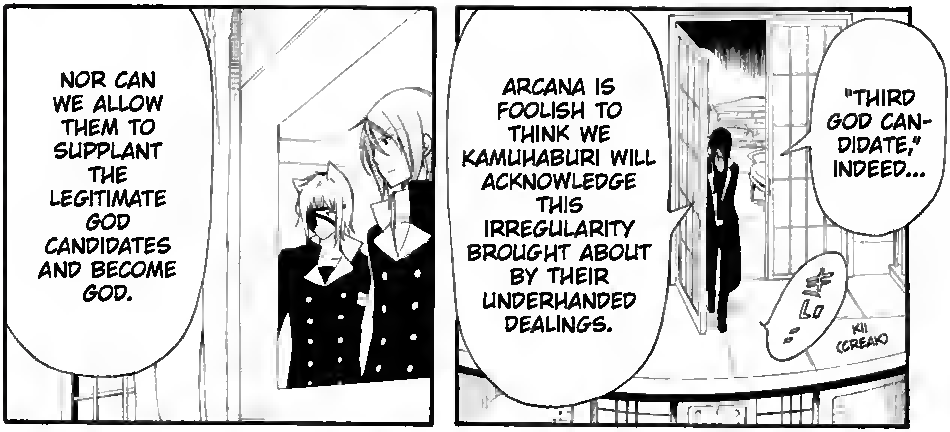

What's the situa-tion?
...I SENT TROOPS TO THE LOCATIONS, BUT...
...ONE'S ALREADY BEEN LOST TO SATSUKI AND ANOTHER TO ARCANA.
NOT GREAT, I CAN TELL YOU.

What should we do about Hinata?
...we're not gonna abandon him, are we?

YOU TWO RENDEZVOUS WITH THE TROOPS SAFEGUARDING THE RELICS.
I'LL JOIN YOU ONCE I CONFIRM THE CRUSADES HAVE BEGUN.
KATSU CHAO
Roger.

WELL... NORMALLY WE WOULDN'T BE OBLIGED TO RESCUE A FOOL WHO MARCHES IN WITHOUT NOTICE OR APPROVAL...
...AND GETS HIMSELF CAUGHT.

BUT IF HE DOES REMAIN IN ARCANA'S CLUTCHES... YOU CAN KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR HIM...
...WHILE YOU'RE RAIDING ARCANA THIS EVENING.
!


"THIRD GOD CANDIDATE," INDEED...
ARCANA IS FOOLISH TO THINK WE KAMUHABURI WILL ACKNOWLEDGE THIS IRREGULARITY BROUGHT ABOUT BY THEIR UNDERHANDED DEALINGS.
NOR CAN WE ALLOW THEM TO SUPPLANT THE LEGITIMATE GOD CANDIDATES AND BECOME GOD.

SIX HOURS FROM NOW...
...AT MIDNIGHT, THE LAST OF THE CRUSADES SHALL COMMENCE.

IN THIS FINAL CRUSADE... KAMUHA-BURI'S TOP PRIORITY WILL BE ARCANA'S ANNIHILA-TION.
WE SHALL PURGE THE WORLD OF ARCANA TONIGHT.
DON'T LEAVE A SINGLE ONE OF THEM ALIVE BY THE CRUSADES' END.

I TOOK A QUICK LOOK AROUND, BUT...
...I DIDN'T SEE ANYONE LURKING IN THE SHADOWS OR ANYTHING.
IT REALLY DOESN'T SEEM TO BE A TRAP.
... HMPH.
I BELIEVE IT IS JUST AS KANADE SAID...
THAT AFTER LEAVING KAMUHABURI, RIDO CONSTRUCTED A NEW LAB FOR HIS EXPERIMENTS.
THERE IS EVIDENCE OF RIDO'S HANDIWORK IN SEVERAL PLACES...
...AND THE BRAIN-WASHING EQUIPMENT IS ALL HERE.
THE PROGRAM LOOKS TO BE AUTHENTIC TOO.

...THEN IS IT ALSO TRUE THAT KANADE HAS ALREADY KILLED RIDO?
GOOD RID-DANCE.
I HOPE I'M NEVER MADE TO DO ANYTHING I'M NOT AWARE OF EVER AGAIN.

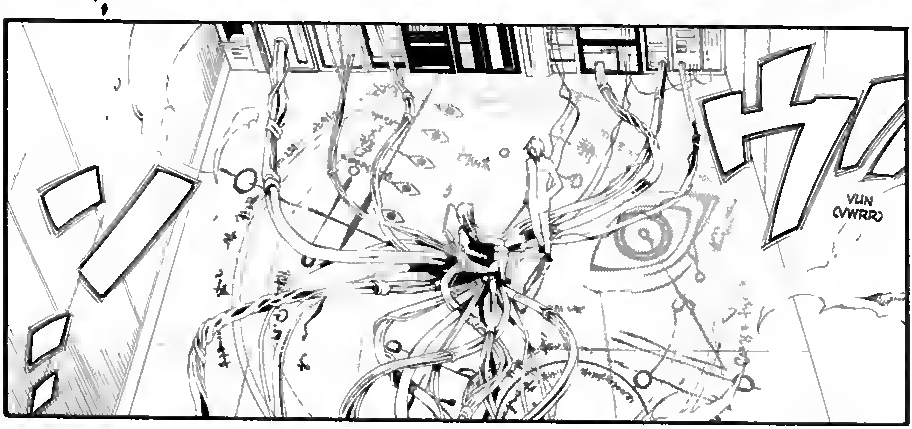
THIS IS UNEX-PECTED, THOUGH.
I THOUGHT FOR SURE SHE'D GIVE US FALSE INTEL OR SOME-THING.
TRUE. PERHAPS SHE'S ACTUALLY HONORABLE WHEN IT COMES TO DEALS.
KATA (TAPPA)
KATA

OR...
...IT'S THAT TSUKIMIYA NO LONGER PIQUES HER INTEREST OR HAS VALUE...
...NOW THAT KANADE CAN'T EXPLOIT HER FURTHER... NOT IF RIDO'S DEAD...
I WISH SHE WOULDN'T RANDOMLY SWING BETWEEN BEING INTERESTED IN AND BORED WITH ME.
TCH.

BEFORE WE GET STARTED, I JUST WANT TO SAY THANKS.
GOOD. WELL THEN...
LET'S START THE REVERSAL!
KATSU (TAK)

...OKAY, SETUP IS COMPLETE.
GACHA (CHAK)

VUVUVUVU
VUVUVUVU (VRRRR)
Fire it up, Hana-mura.
YES, SIR.
ENTER
KACHI (TAP)


VUN (VWRR)

...NH!
DOO (WHOOM)
THE MARK IS...!
!
KACHI (SFX)

IT EMERGED FROM THE BLACK SEAL.
...I SEE.
HE EMBEDDED IMPS THAT FED OFF THE BLACK SEAL'S POWER.
...HANAMURA.
THERE'S A SHIELD UP SO THEY CAN'T ESCAPE, RIGHT?
Yes, absolutely.
... OKAY ...

...HE'S SO ENER-GETIC.
GUTTARI (SLUMP)
BISHA (SPLASH)
ZUSHA (SLASH)
WA HA HA HA!
DOGO (THUD)

THEN I SHALL SLAY ALL OF THEM.
CHA (CHAK)

...HUH? I CAN HEAR SOMETHING... THROUGH THE MARK...

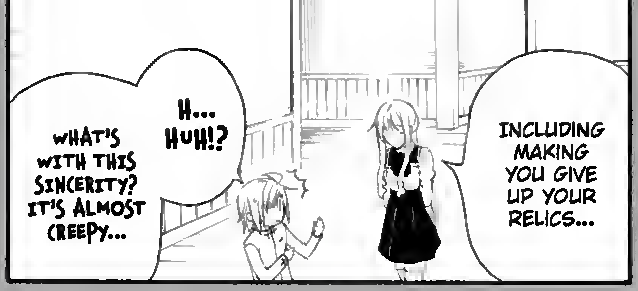
... PREY.

ARE THESE...
DON'T LET HIM GET AWAY!!
HUR-RY!
WE COULD FEED OFF HIM FOR-EVER!
RAVAGE HIS MIND! CON-TROL HIM!
LET'S POS-SESS HIM!
PREY EVEN MORE WORTHY OF US!
SUCH VAST PRETTY POWER

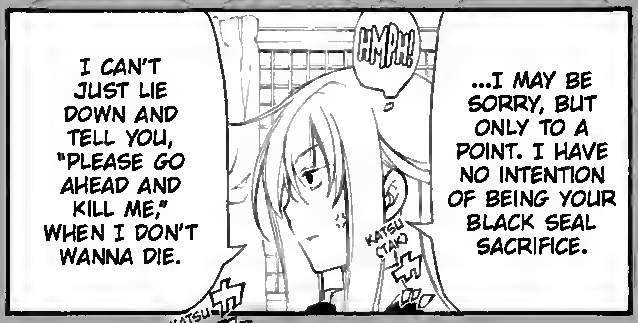
EAT HIM!!
OUR NEW HOST !!!
BAKUN (CHOMP)
!!
...THE THOUGHTS OF THE IMPS POSSESSING ME...!?
WHA ...!?
ZUPUN (SLRP)
!!
HUH?
UZO
UZO (WRITHE)
...HOW DARE YOU GO AFTER HIM...
...WHEN YOU'RE STILL ATTACHED TO ME!?
PASHI (SNATCH)

BOTH OF THEM !?
AN ILLUSORY WORLD INSIDE THE IMPS' BELLY? I THINK?
WHERE ...?

THEY...
...SEEM TO BE THE TYPE THAT DEVOUR THEIR PREY.
RIDO HAD FORCIBLY EMBEDDED THEM IN YOU.
I GUESS PULLING THEM OUT SET THEM FREE?
THANKS FOR THE ANALYSIS, MR. CALM-AND-CASUAL.
WHY DON'T I SENSE ANY URGENCY?
ABOUT THIS HOUSE...
I DON'T RECOGNIZE IT...IS IT A PROJECTION FROM YOUR MIND?
?
...I THOUGHT THE IMPS PULLED IT OUT OF YOUR MEMORY?
THEN WHOSE IS IT...?
AN ESTATE BORDERED BY FOREST AND A RIVER...
NOT A PLACE I'VE EVER BEEN, AT LEAST.
...WHERE ARE THE IMPS?
WE CAN GET OUT OF HERE IF WE BEAT THEM, RIGHT?
LET'S GO FIND 'EM!

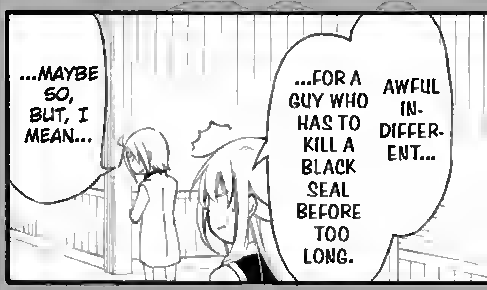

H... HUH!?
WHAT'S WITH THIS SINCERITY? IT'S ALMOST CREEPY...
INCLUDING MAKING YOU GIVE UP YOUR RELICS...

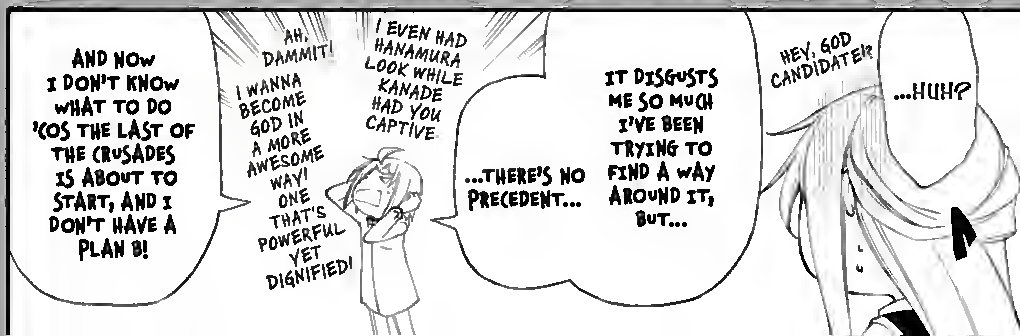
.....
SORRY FOR GETTING YOU INTO THIS MESS.


I CAN'T JUST LIE DOWN AND TELL YOU, "PLEASE GO AHEAD AND KILL ME," WHEN I DON'T WANNA DIE.
...I MAY BE SORRY, BUT ONLY TO A POINT. I HAVE NO INTENTION OF BEING YOUR BLACK SEAL SACRIFICE.
HMPH!
KATSU
KATSU

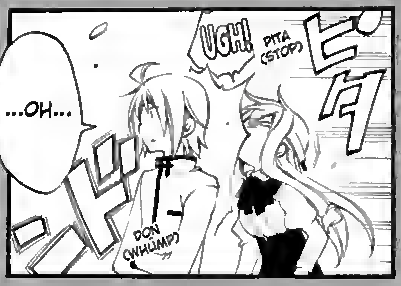
YEAH, I FIGURED THAT WAS THE CASE.
...WHICH ARE NOT THE SAME AS YOURS.
I'M ONLY HERE FOR MY OWN INTERESTS ...
KATSU

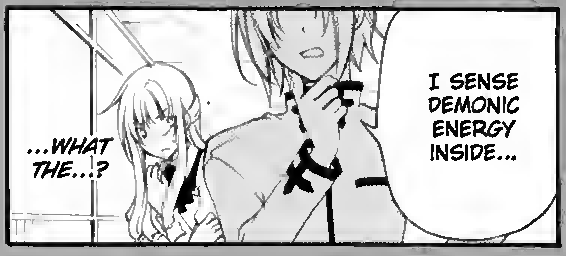
I ABSO-LUTELY HATE IT.
ISN'T IT DISGUST-ING?
...THIS WHOLE SACRIFICE BUSINESS ...
GAG.
I MEAN, WHAT ERA IS THIS? WHAT FAITH?


...MAYBE SO, BUT, I MEAN...
...FOR A GUY WHO HAS TO KILL A BLACK SEAL BEFORE TOO LONG.
AWFUL IN-DIFFER-ENT...


AND NOW I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO 'COS THE LAST OF THE CRUSADES IS ABOUT TO START, AND I DON'T HAVE A PLAN B!
AH, DAMMIT! I WANNA BECOME GOD IN A MORE AWESOME WAY! ONE THAT'S POWERFUL YET DIGNIFIED!
I EVEN HAD HANAMURA LOOK WHILE KANADE HAD YOU CAPTIVE
...THERE'S NO PRECEDENT...
IT DISGUSTS ME SO MUCH I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND A WAY AROUND IT, BUT...
HEY, GOD CANDIDATE!
...HUH?

THIS IS THE GUY I MIGHT END UP DYING FOR...?
KATSU
HMM HMM
AND EVEN IF I FIND A WAY, THERE'S SATSUKI...
...AND NOW...
...IZUMI, WHO'S APPARENTLY BECOME A THIRD GOD CANDIDATE.
KATSU


...OH...
UGU!
PITA (STOP)
DON (WHUMP)


I SENSE DEMONIC ENERGY INSIDE...
...WHAT THE...?

ZOKU (SHUDDER)

I FEEL LIKE I SHOULDN'T ENTER THIS ROOM...!
ARE YOU READY?
THEY'RE PROBABLY LYING IN WAIT FOR US.

AH!
WAIT, HOLD O—
LET'S GO!
GACHA (KACHAK)
BAN (SLAM)
...!
—WHAT... IS THIS WEIRD FEELING?
WHO IS...
...THAT MAN...?

OH!
...HEY!!
IDIOT!!
WAKE UP! SNAP OUT OF IT!

IT'S RISKY TO LEAVE THEM ON THE FRONT LINE.
TAKE THESE TWO RELICS TO TOKIWA-SAN AT KAMUHABURI HEAD-QUARTERS.

WE'RE COUNTING ON YOU, SETSU.

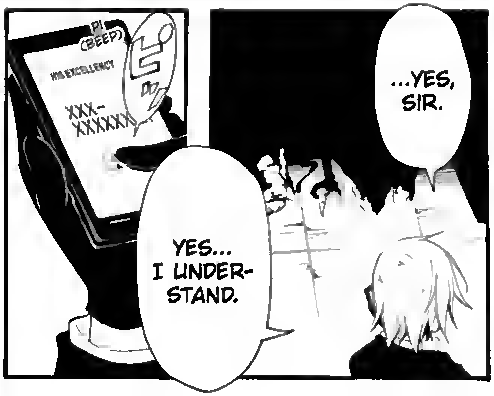
WE SENT DECOYS AHEAD TO THROW OFF ANY FOES, BUT...
...BE CARE-FUL, OKAY?
YES, I SWEAR I WILL DELIVER THESE.
11
WITH THE CRUSADE ABOUT TO START...
...I WISH WE WEREN'T AT SUCH A DISADVAN-TAGE.
TO CDWSHD
ONCE WE'VE TAKEN CARE OF THE RELICS, IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE WE'RE CRUSHING THE LIFE OUT OF ARCANA.
NO WAY.
YOU'RE QUITE CONFI-DENT.
WELL ...
...TOKIWA-SAN WILL MAKE HIS MOVE AT MIDNIGHT.
WE JUST NEED TO BIDE OUR TIME.
THERE'S LESS THAN AN HOUR LEFT...
... AND THEN ...
SHURU (SLITHER)
...THE FINAL CRUSADE WILL BEGIN.

BLOODY CROSS

BLOODY CROSS

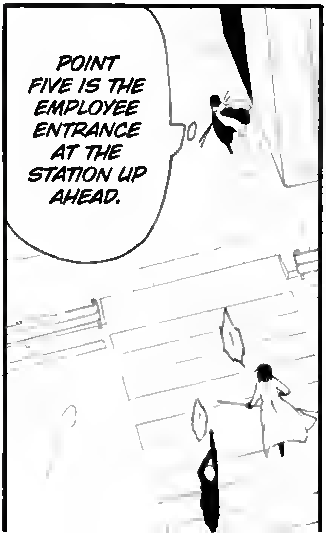
RE-PORT-ING IN.
WE'VE ACQUIRED ONE OF TSUZUKI'S RELICS.
WE'VE ALSO SIGHTED ONE KAMUHABURI MEMBER...
...WHO SEEMS TO BE MAKING HIS WAY TOWARD THEIR HEAD-QUARTERS WITH TWO ADDITIONAL RELICS.

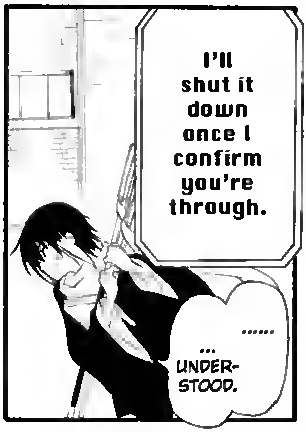
Chapter 63
Who Witnessed the Death?

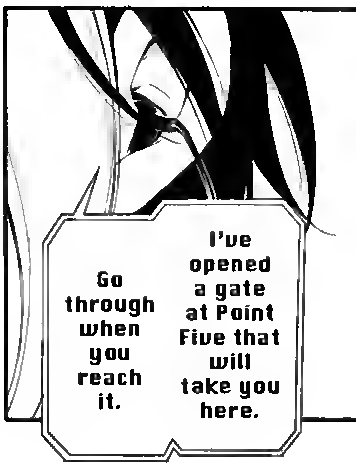


AND WE ARE AUTHO-RIZED TO KILL HIM.

...TCH!
IT'S NO USE, TOKIWA-SAN.
I CAN'T SHAKE THE ENEMY.

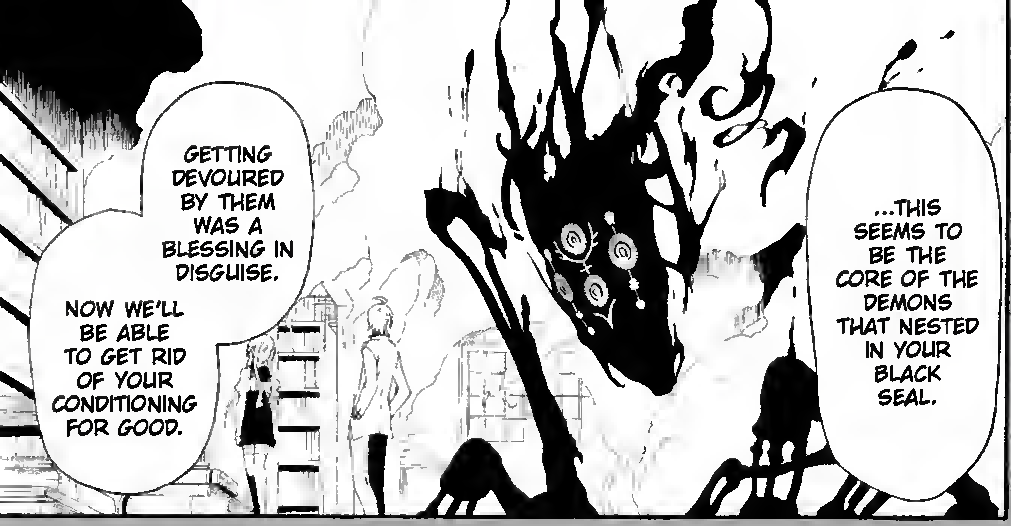

POINT FIVE IS THE EMPLOYEE ENTRANCE AT THE STATION UP AHEAD.


I'll shut it down once I confirm you're through.
.....
... UNDER-STOOD.


I've opened a gate at Point Five that will take you here.
Go through when you reach it.

IF WE CAN HOLD OUT, THERE WILL SOON BE NEW RELICS FOR THEM TO FIGHT OVER.
...TO WHITTLE DOWN OUR SIDE'S RELIC COUNT.
THIS IS ALL THE TIME THE ENEMY HAS LEFT...
TA (TMP)
THIRTY MINUTES UNTIL THE CRUSADE BEGINS...
ONCE THESE RELICS ARE HIDDEN AT KAMUHABURI HQ...
GYU (CLENCH)
...IT WON'T BE SO EASY FOR OUR FOES TO GET HOLD OF THEM...
HYU (SWISH)
!?
GUN (WHIRL)
PASHI (SNATCH)
DON'T RELEASE HIM.
.....!

HEY !!
IDIOT !!
WAKE UP! SNAP OUT OF IT!
OH!
...YEESH, DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT.
TO (TMP)
...SO...
BA (LEAP)
BAKUN (CHOMP)

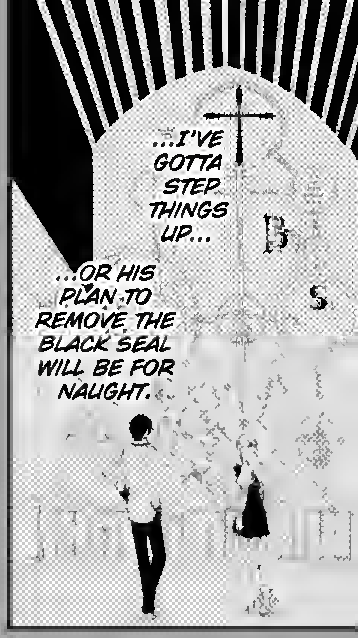

...THIS SEEMS TO BE THE CORE OF THE DEMONS THAT NESTED IN YOUR BLACK SEAL.
GETTING DEVOURED BY THEM WAS A BLESSING IN DISGUISE.
NOW WE'LL BE ABLE TO GET RID OF YOUR CONDITIONING FOR GOOD.

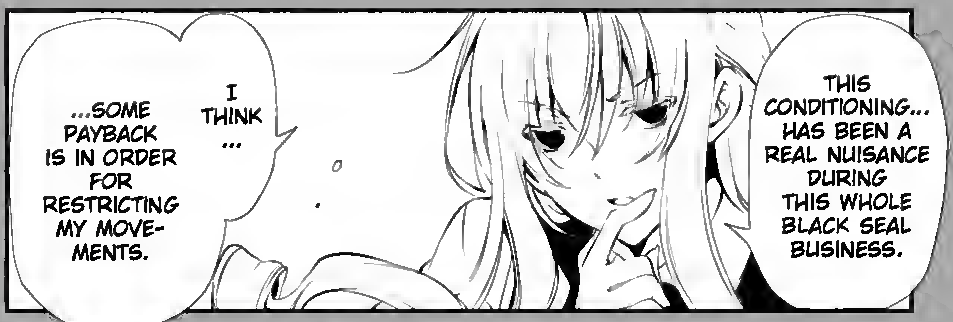
PREY...
...PREY
GAI (WHAM)
DEVOUR
DEVOUR
DEVOUR
WHA...!?
DEVOUR... DEVOUR!!

KARI (NIP)
...WITH HINATA IN ARCANA'S CLUTCHES...

AND...
SHUN (SHWP)
...DEFEATING IT WILL NOT ONLY UNDO THE BRAINWASHING, BUT ALLOW US TO ESCAPE THIS ILLUSION AS WELL!

ZAA (FWSH)


...I'VE GOTTA STEP THINGS UP...
...OR HIS PLAN TO REMOVE THE BLACK SEAL WILL BE FOR NAUGHT.

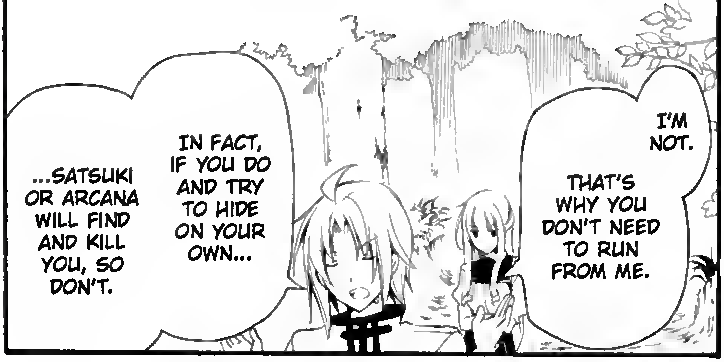

THIS CONDITIONING... HAS BEEN A REAL NUISANCE DURING THIS WHOLE BLACK SEAL BUSINESS.
I THINK ...
...SOME PAYBACK IS IN ORDER FOR RESTRICTING MY MOVEMENTS.

KRRR

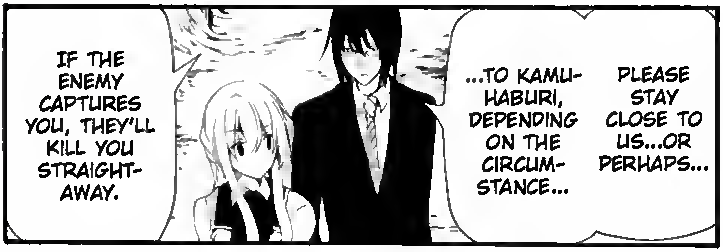
OKAY! NICE ASSIST, MINION!
TCH!
I WASN'T ASSISTING YOU!
I MUST SAY, YOU ARE DUMB DEMONS TO HAVE DEVOURED ME!
ZUBA GLASH
I'LL EXOR-CISE YOU...
...AND THIS PLANE YOU'VE INFESTED IN ONE FELL SWOOP!!
E-
PISHI (KRAK)

PAN (PLRSH)
ARE WE... OUT?
ARE YOU BOTH ALL RIGHT?
OH, MY DOG!
WE'RE BACK, HANAMURA-SAN.
GACHA (KACHAK)
...!
THE EXTRA PATTERNING IS GONE.
AH... THEN IT MEANS IT'S BEEN UNDONE FOR GOOD.

...TCH, THAT TOOK WAY TOO LONG.
THOUGH IT WAS ONLY ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES.
...STILL...
23:40...
TWENTY MINUTES UNTIL THE FINAL CRUSADE.
THE BACK OF A STRANGER...
—EY.
...WHAT WAS IT I SAW WHEN WE ENTERED THAT ROOM?
I THINK YOU KNOW THIS BUT...
...TO-NIGHT... AFTER THE CRUSADES WRAP UP...
...ONE OF YOU BLACK SEALS, EITHER YOU OR TOKIWA, WILL BE SACRIFICED ON THE ALTAR AND DIE.
YOU'D BETTER PREPARE YOURSELF.
HEY! ARE YOU LISTENING?
WHAT?
YOU'RE SPACING OUT ON ME. YOU SURE YOU'RE OKAY?

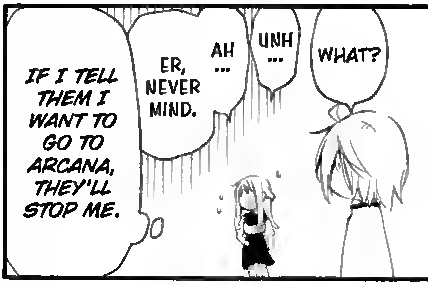

...SATSUKI OR ARCANA WILL FIND AND KILL YOU, SO DON'T.
IN FACT, IF YOU DO AND TRY TO HIDE ON YOUR OWN...
I'M NOT.
THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T NEED TO RUN FROM ME.

...I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T KEEN ON THE IDEA.
HMPH


IF THE ENEMY CAPTURES YOU, THEY'LL KILL YOU STRAIGHT-AWAY.
...TO KAMU-HABURI, DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUM-STANCE...
PLEASE STAY CLOSE TO US...OR PERHAPS...

...YOU'RE A TOTAL OUTSIDER WHO GOT DRAGGED INTO THIS.
UNLIKE TOKIWA...

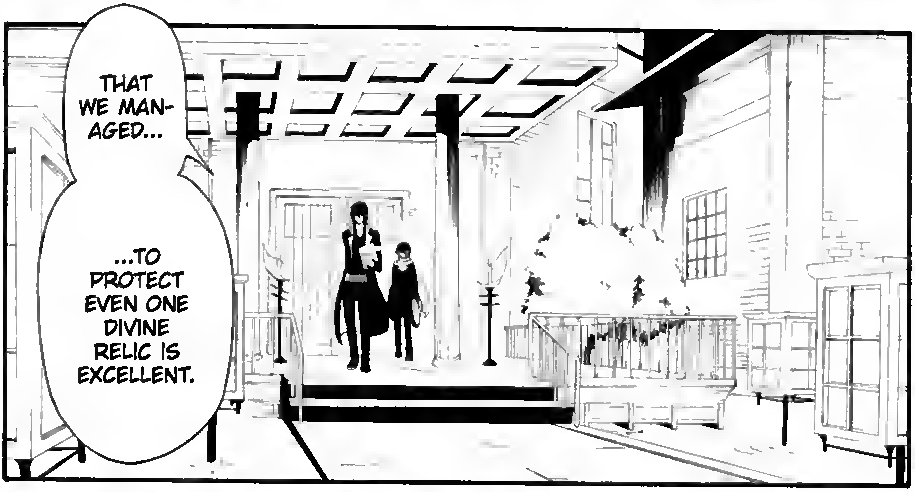
...I, UH, NEED TO...
WHILE I DO WANT TO STAY IN THE SAFETY ZONE...
AHH SHOOT
...ABOUT THAT.


IF I TELL THEM I WANT TO GO TO ARCANA, THEY'LL STOP ME.
ER, NEVER MIND.
AH...
UNH...
WHAT?

I'VE BEEN GIVING IT A LOT OF THOUGHT...
.....
NGH...

AT FIRST, YOU WERE JUST A PETTY THIEF WHOSE MIXED-RACE CURSE I UNDID WITH DIVINE POWER...
...BUT AFTERWARD I PULLED YOU INTO THE CRUSADES TO SERVE AS MY PAWN.
YOU SHOULD NOT HAVE TO LOSE YOUR LIFE.
...OR, RATHER, I DON'T FEEL LIKE I HAVE THE RIGHT TO SACRIFICE YOU...
...SEEING AS HOW I WAS THE ONE WHO GOT YOU INVOLVED.
...YEAH.
SO THAT'S IT.
I'VE DECIDED NOT TO KILL YOU.
IF I HAVE TO SACRIFICE SOMEONE, IT'LL BE TOKIWA.

GOOD WORK.

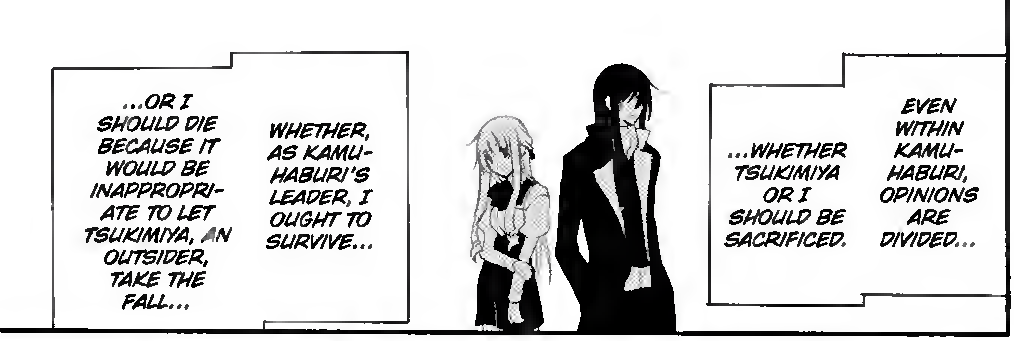

THAT WE MANAGED...
...TO PROTECT EVEN ONE DIVINE RELIC IS EXCELLENT.

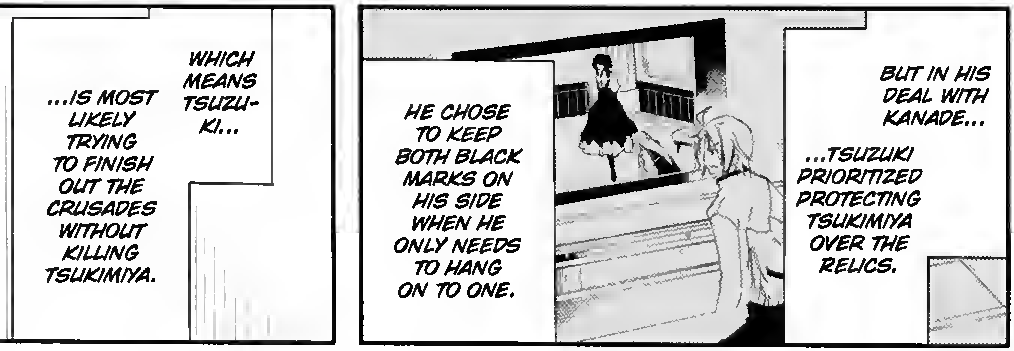
ONCE THE CRUSADES START AND THE LORD GOD CANDIDATE IS SET...
...WE'LL COUNTER-ATTACK
NO.
DON'T GO AFTER THEM.

...OH NO, SIR.
THE RELIC ARCANA STOLE FROM ME CAN'T BE TOO FAR AWAY YET.
I'LL GO RECOVER IT.
GO (CLENCH)

THE LORD GOD CANDIDATE WAS CONSIDERING...
...LETTING THE ENEMY HAVE THESE FOUR RELICS ANYWAY.
IT WAS WE KAMUHABURI WHO WERE EAGER TO PROTECT THEM.
BUT...
DO NOT FRET.
IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO RETRIEVE NOW.
AND WE'VE NOT LOST UNTIL ALL THIRTEEN ARE TOGETHER.
YOU UNDERSTAND ME?
GO BACK TO KIKUSAKA, SETSU...
...AND PREPARE FOR THE CRUSADE.
.....
YES, SIR.
TA (SHAOO)
...NOW THEN...

KOTSU KOTSU
THIS CLOCK'S CHIME WILL SIGNAL...
...THE COM-MENCE-MENT OF THE CRU-SADES.
THE CRU-SADES ...
...AND THE BLACK MARK ...


...OR I SHOULD DIE BECAUSE IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO LET TSUKIMIYA, AN OUTSIDER, TAKE THE FALL...
WHETHER, AS KAMUHABURI'S LEADER, I OUGHT TO SURVIVE...
...WHETHER TSUKIMIYA OR I SHOULD BE SACRIFICED.
EVEN WITHIN KAMUHABURI, OPINIONS ARE DIVIDED...


...IS MOST LIKELY TRYING TO FINISH OUT THE CRUSADES WITHOUT KILLING TSUKIMIYA.
WHICH MEANS TSUZUKI...
HE CHOSE TO KEEP BOTH BLACK MARKS ON HIS SIDE WHEN HE ONLY NEEDS TO HANG ON TO ONE.
BUT IN HIS DEAL WITH KANADE...
...TSUZUKI PRIORITIZED PROTECTING TSUKIMIYA OVER THE RELICS.

...SINCE I WAS CHOSEN TO RECEIVE A BLACK MARK.
AFTER ALL, I'VE BEEN RESIGNED TO MY FATE...
...THEN I SHALL HONOR THE GOD CANDIDATE'S WILL.

A SNEAKING SPY!?
GA (WHAM)

...WHO'S THERE?

GASA (RUSTLE)

A SNAKE ...?
BOTO (PLOP)
ビィト！
.....!

KA-NADE ...!
EVENING. SURE IS A LOVELY NIGHT.
BA OWHOOSHO
...NEVER MIND... ...I ASSUMED YOU WOULD COME HERE AT SOME POINT.
AN UNEXPECTED RESPONSE
OH MY. HOW-EVER DID YOU FIGURE THAT OUT?
... NO ...
YOUR KEY SHOULD NOT WORK ANYMORE. HOW DID YOU GET IN?
YOU MADE CONTACT WITH TSUKIMIYA IN ORDER TO KILL HER GUARDS, ENSURING OFFICER-CLASS PERSONNEL WOULD BE SUMMONED...
...SO THAT THEY WOULD LEAD YOU TO THIS NEW KAMUHABURI LOCATION.
チャプ CHAPU (SPLISH)
HMPH ...
IN WHICH CASE, I KNEW YOU HAD TO HAVE SOME OTHER GOAL.
THAT DEAL WITH LORD GOD CAN-DIDATE... IT OFFERED TOO LITTLE PLEASURE OR ADVAN-TAGE FOR ONE SUCH AS YOU.
...AH, HOW UNPLEAS-ANT.
CHAPU CHAPU チャプ チャプ

YOU ARE CORRECT.
ZAPA (SPLOOSH)
ZUGAGAGA (RAT-TAT-TAT)
HYURURU (WHIRL)
AH, IS THAT SO?
.....
HEE... YOU SEE...
...I CAME HERE TO KILL YOU.♥

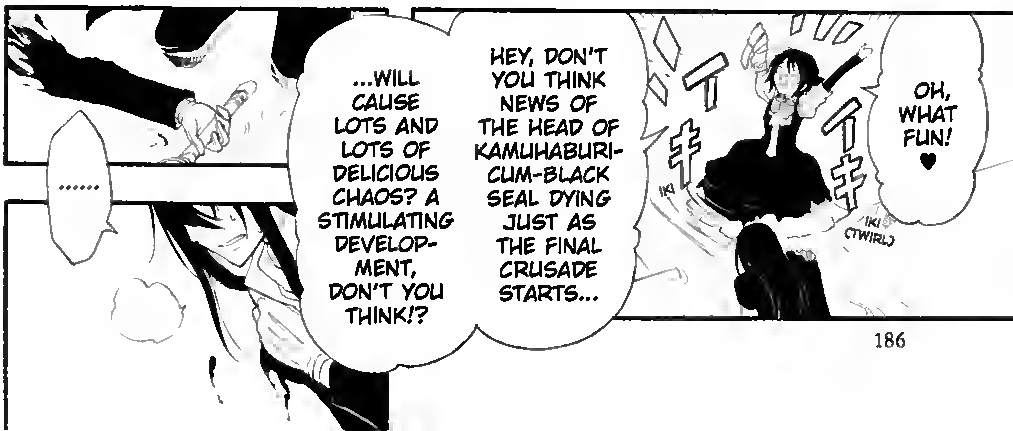
...!
GA CHAANO
GAGAGA
DOGAGA (RAT-A-TAT)

CHAFU (SPLISH)
チャプ？

MOVE, AND I'LL BEHEAD YOU.
IF YOU WANT TO KILL ME, DO IT BEFORE YOU ANNOUNCE YOURSELF.
ARE YOU MOCK-ING ME?
OH... BUT...

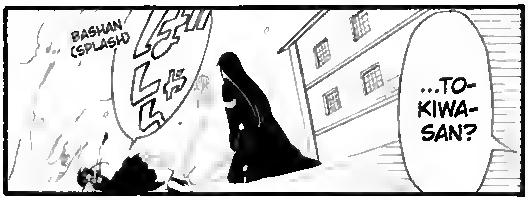
HAGK!
WHAT ...!!?
DOPA (SHLUK)
...AS IT HAPPENS, I AM.
LI'KX
DOCHA! (SPLAT)
DOCHA
LI'KX

"ANY BULLETS I AIM AND FIRE AT TOKIWA WILL STRIKE TRUE." ♥
WHEN I SURVIVED THE SNAKE PIT, I SPELLED A CURSE IN EXCHANGE FOR THE DEMON POWER IN ONE OF MY EYES.
...TOO BAD, NOT ALL THE BULLETS HIT.
THOUGH I GOT ONE ARM.
THE BULLET I DODGED HIT ME FROM BEHIND...!?
MUKU (SIT)


.....
...WILL CAUSE LOTS AND LOTS OF DELICIOUS CHAOS? A STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT, DON'T YOU THINK!?
HEY, DON'T YOU THINK NEWS OF THE HEAD OF KAMUHABURI-CUM-BLACK SEAL DYING JUST AS THE FINAL CRUSADE STARTS...
OH, WHAT FUN! ♥
IKI (TWIRL)

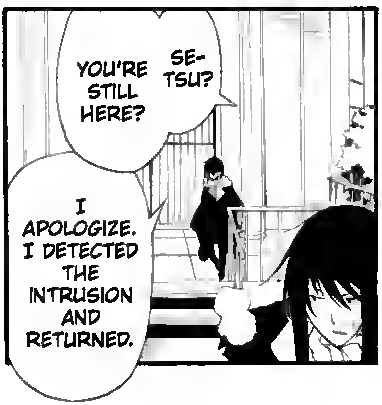
RYU
(CLASH)

DON'T BRING ANY MORE SHAME UPON KAMU-HABURI.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WILL PERISH...
...KA-NADE.


BASHAN
(SPLASH)
...TO-KIWA-SAN?

WOULD YOU...
...ALLOW ME TO DELIVER THE KILLING BLOW?

TOKIWA-SAN.

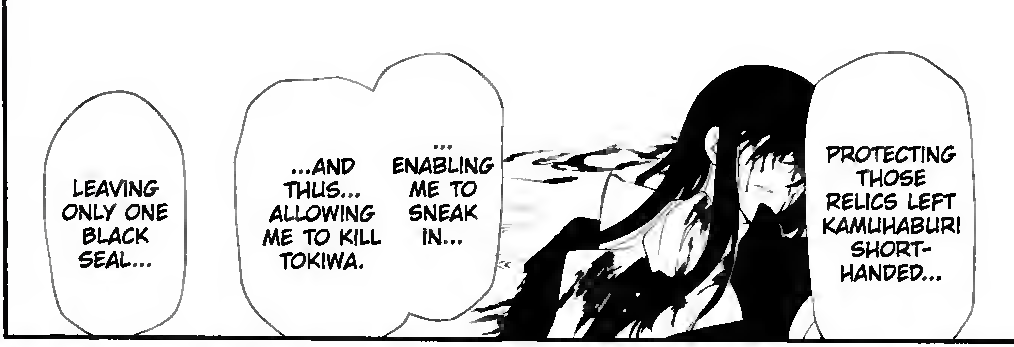

SE-TSU?
YOU'RE STILL HERE?
I APOLOGIZE. I DETECTED THE INTRUSION AND RETURNED.

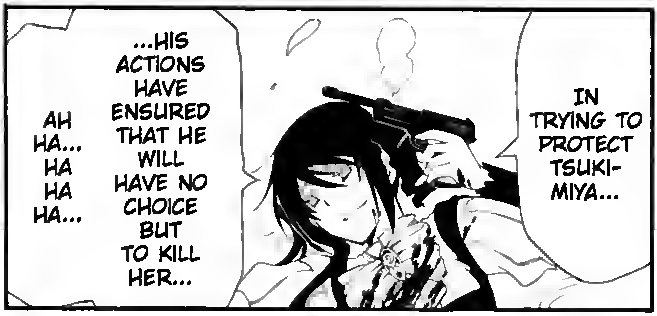
OF COURSE... I RECALL HOW TROUBLED YOU WERE ABOUT YAMAZAKI.
VERY WELL, I LEAVE IT TO YOU.
DO AS YOU WILL.
.....
...THANK YOU VERY MUCH...
...TO-KIWA-SAN.
HYU (SWSW)

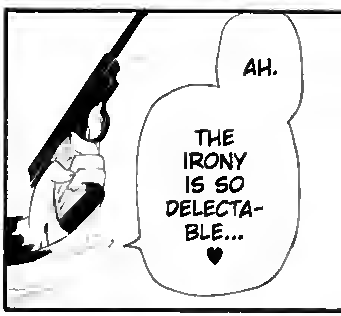
WH... WHAT?
GURA (SLUMP)
SETSU ...!?
EYES: MANIPULATE
THE WORD "MANIPULATE" IN HIS EYES... DON'T TELL ME...KANADE IS...!!
...!!
SU (SSR)
I AM... NO LONGER NEEDED.
MIS- SION...
..COM- PLETE.
DOSHA (WHUMP)

DOSA (THUD)
BISHA (SPLASH)
BISHA
...PFFT.
...GH!
GIRI (CLENCH)
HEE.
HEE HEE HEE.
AH-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!
KANADE!!!

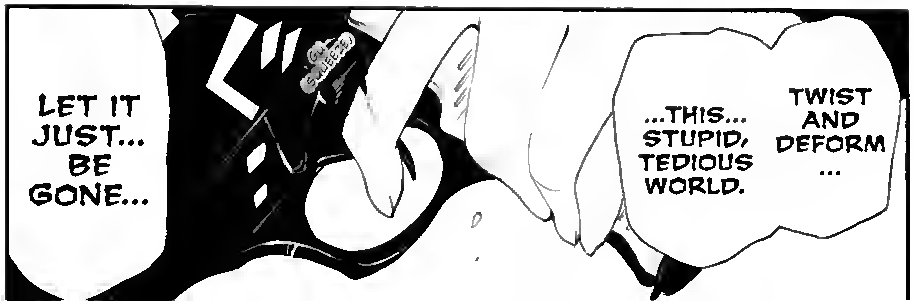
HA HA AH HA
...LIKE A BIG, CLUMSY OAF!!
YOU, THE GREAT TOKIWA... FALLING INTO MY TRAP...
AH!♥ THIS SCENE!
HOW LONG I'VE WANTED TO SEE THIS!
BUT NOW THAT I'VE SEEN IT...
...YOU DON'T MATTER ANY-MORE.
DON (BLAM)
...ONE MORE HAPPY OUTCOME TO ALL THIS...
AND THERE'S ...
PASHAN (SPLATCH)
LETTING GO OF HIS RELICS TO PROTECT TSUKIMIYA...
IT'S SUCH A SHAME.
THAT GOD CAN-DIDATE... TSUZUKI...


PROTECTING THOSE RELICS LEFT KAMUHABURI SHORT-HANDED...
...ENABLING ME TO SNEAK IN...
...AND THUS... ALLOWING ME TO KILL TOKIWA.
LEAVING ONLY ONE BLACK SEAL...


IN TRYING TO PROTECT TSUKI-MIYA...
...HIS ACTIONS HAVE ENSURED THAT HE WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO KILL HER...
AH HA... HA HA HA...


AH.
THE IRONY IS SO DELECTA-BLE... ♥

GORI (PRESS)
THE CRU-SADES... THIS WORLD...
EVERY-THING.
...AH...
LET IT ALL GO TO HELL...


LET IT JUST... BE GONE...
...THIS... STUPID, TEDIOUS WORLD.
TWIST AND DEFORM ...

PASHA (SPLASH)
DON (BLAM)
カチ
GODON
GODON
GODON
GODON (GONGGG)

AND SO BEGINS THE FINAL NIGHT OF THE CRUSADES.

BLOODY CROSS

.....
WHEN ONE GOD CANDIDATE AMASSES ALL THIRTEEN DIVINE RELICS, THE SACRIFICIAL ALTAR APPEARS...
I INTEND TO WIN EVEN IF I HAVE TO USE UP ALL OF THE POWER I WAS AWARDED AS A GOD CANDIDATE, BUT...
...I CAN'T WIN THE CRUSADES THROUGH WILLPOWER ALONE.
LUCK
...AND, THE BLOOD OF ONE MARKED BY A BLACK SEAL OFFERED UPON IT, THE RITE OF ASCENSION CONCLUDES.
...I ONLY HAVE...
...A LITTLE SANITY LEFT...

WE MUST TAKE AS MANY AS POSSI-BLE.
...HAVE MANI-FESTED AT THE SAME TIME.
ALL FIVE RE-MAINING DIVINE RELICS ...
IN THIS, THE FINAL CRUSADE, WHO WILL WIN AND BREAK THE FETTERS OF DESTINY AND FATE...!?
...AND THINK ONLY OF SAVING YOUR OWN HIDE?
OR...
...WILL YOU AVERT YOUR EYES FROM THE SUFFERING OF YOUR COMRADES ...
TSUKIMIYA
XXXXXXXX-XXX

To be continued in BLOODY CROSS Vol. 12!!

BLOODY CROSS 11

Shiwo Komeyama

Translation: Mari Morimoto • Lettering: Abigail Blackman

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